

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Manuel Nobriga

Manuel Nobriga emigrated in 1907 from Madeira, Portugal, where he was born on April 7, 1898. He sailed to Hawai'i on a cargo boat with his parents, brothers and sisters. The Nobriga family settled in Waipahu's Spanish Camp, a housing area for O'ahu Sugar Company's Spanish and Portuguese laborers.

After eighth grade at Waipahu School, Nobriga went to work in the sugar mill in 1913 as an oiler and cane feeder. In 1917 he left Waipahu to work at Lahaina's Pioneer Mill Company. He next worked at Pā'ia's Maui Agricultural Company. While on Maui, he learned the machinist trade. After a couple of years working for various shops in Honolulu, he returned to Waipahu in 1921 as a machinist in the O'ahu Sugar Company machine shop.

A member of the plantation's sports committee, Nobriga was placed in charge of cycling activities. He served as president of the bicycle club, the Waipahu Pedal Pushers.

Nobriga remembers a man being strafed by airplane fire in a ballpark near his home on the day Pearl Harbor was attacked. During the war, Nobriga joined the Hawai'i Territorial Guard. As a wartime sideline to his plantation job, Nobriga cut and shaped pipe fittings for a defense contractor.

Although close to O'ahu Sugar Plantation manager Hans L'Orange, Nobriga was an early supporter of the International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). He was among the signers of the first sugar contract between the sugar planters and the ILWU in 1945. Just before the labor strike of 1946, Nobriga was promoted to mill shift engineer, a management position.

Manuel Nobriga married Lucy Perreira in 1922. In 1926 when his first child was a year old, Nobriga became a naturalized U.S. citizen. At the time of his interview, he had 6 children and 107 grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren.

Tape Nos. 22-54-1-93 and 22-55-1-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Manuel Nobriga (MN)

March 8, 1993

Waipahu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Manuel Nobriga on March 8, 1993, at his home in Waipahu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Nobriga, why don't we start by having you tell me when you were born and where you were born?

MN: Well, I was born in the year 1898, April 7. I was born in Funchal, Madeira—that's the island from Portugal. We lived there, [then] we left there from the island to come to Hawai'i. The sugar planters went around to get [i.e., recruit] sugar people, so we left there sometime in late (October), as close as I can remember. We arrived in Hawai'i December 1. All the time we were in the ocean.

WN: December 1, what year?

MN: Nineteen-six [1906].

WN: Nineteen-six, okay. Before we get to your trip to Hawai'i, tell me something about your father [Valentin Nobriga]. What was he before he came to Hawai'i?

MN: My father---we lived in a farm. We had a milking cow, and everything, of course, on the farm. But my dad was in the lumber business there. They had a lot of big trees and all that. Something like when we came to Hawai'i, we had a lot of *kiawe*, but that was chopped up for fuel, for people cook and all that. So that thing happened to my dad, the same thing back there. When the lumber went out, the trees went down, he went out of business. Then, they [recruiters] went around there to get people for the sugar work. He registered to come to Hawai'i. When we came here had four boys, three girls.

WN: What number were you?

MN: I was number—one, two, three, four—five. I was five.

WN: Now, your father was then a farmer and a lumber man?

MN: Yeah, farmer and lumber man. The lumber was on the side. And anyway, we couldn't make it there. Everything was from the farm. They went broke.



WN: What was your house like, if you remember?

MN: Well, we had a nice house, but the kitchen was separated from the house. There was no floors on the kitchen. And we go just a few feet away from the main house, that's where we used to eat, cook, and everything there, over fire, all wood fire. And the floor was so hard that you couldn't even get your feet dirty from stepping on all that, that was the floor. Then we sleep in the main house. My dad used to sleep upstairs, us kids had couple of rooms, we sleep downstairs. It was four boys in one room, my three sisters in the other room. One was born in Hawai'i, Eva. She died when she was sixteen. That was the whole family. But when we came to Hawai'i [in 1907], if we came on the boat, we came on a rig. Well, was actually a regular passenger—wasn't a passenger boat, was one of these general cargo boats and they made bleachers and everything in the boat. Each family had a little fence off like part in the boat. And we had three beds. There was no doors, they had curtains all alongside there.

WN: How did you feel about leaving Portugal to come to Hawai'i? Do you remember how you felt?

MN: Well, when we left there, I felt very happy, we're going somewhere. Kid, eh? I was eight-and-a-half years old then. I used to be very close to my dad. Everywhere my dad went, I was with him, see. And back home [Portugal], when he had to go out for business, my mother [Leanora Ornellas Nobriga] used to tell him, "Take the boy." So at my age, I was number five, I went with him everywhere, so I was very close to my dad. When I was six, seven, eight years old, my dad took me everywhere. Come on the ship [to Hawai'i], the same thing. Would go up on ship. We came through the Atlantic [Ocean]. After we crossed the Magellan Straits, we hit the Pacific Ocean. And everything was calm. Every day, when the sun about to go down, my dad would take me up on top and we watched the sun go down. But I used to think the sun used to go down right in the water, because way in the horizon, yeah? I used to tell my dad, "The sun supposed to be fire, but it's not smoking."

He said, "No, no, no. That's going to the other side of the world. It's not going into the water." But I couldn't understand that (chuckles), till I went to school, I found out what the horizon was. I couldn't read, I couldn't do all that stuff. My dad didn't know how to explain those things, you know, because he had no schooling or anything. My mother could read. She had church books, she learned [about] masses and all that [from] Catholic church books. She could read all that. She couldn't write.

WN: What were---did you go to school in . . .

MN: No, there were no schools in Madeira. There were schools for maybe—they had a special teacher that people who had money paid for their kids go there. The well off. But you're a farmer, you better believe it, you die a farmer. Schooling, no, no, no. All they taught us was religion. You see a priest go by, you kiss his hand. They used to pass over our farm, up above on the main road go down to Funchal, to the town. We lived about five or six miles out of town. They passed up above every week, certain time. I forgot what day of the week. We kids used to get set. Those who could walk, walk up the hill, the main road above our farm, walk up there and wait for the priest. The priest pass by, we kiss his hand, he was like a god. That's what we were trained. Real strong religion, didn't hurt me at all. (Chuckles) When I came to Hawai'i, I took up the religion very serious. I always was---I was always born a Catholic.

I'd like to talk a little bit about religion. I'm a Catholic, but all this stuff you learn in the Catholic religion, when you get grown up, you start thinking for yourself. From the eighth grade in Waipahu, across the Waipahu Elementary School here is Waipahu Street. The [St. Joseph's] Church, the old church was built there, so I used to go catechism there. I took my communion when I was twelve years old. You could not take communion unless you were twelve. So you had to have that thing pound in your head, you do everything. Then I took my religion very serious. I took my first communion, then I became an altar boy, help the priests. In the old days, the old Roman mass was different. The priest came here with a chalice, you pour the wine, the water. The guys that like a lot of wine, you pour more wine (chuckles). So I was the wine guy. If not enough, the whole thing go in there sometimes. Lot of the priests became alcoholics, you know. (Chuckles) This is what, years afterwards, I start thinking. Anyway, I learned all that. But the confession, I couldn't understand. I could not understand confession. I couldn't understand why God knew everything, but you had to tell the priest. I was twelve years old already, see. I start to say, "What the heck? Why should I tell the priest if he already knows?"

(Laughter)

MN: And that kept on for—that got in my head for years and years. I doubted. Anyway, then I joined the Holy Name Society, I went in everything. I wanted to know everything about the worship. Years back, I went to Lahaina. I left home. I was seventeen, eighteen years old, left home. I went to Lahaina, Maui. And I joined the Sacred Heart of Jesus there. I was a Catholic, I wanted to know more. Maria Lanakila, the church, it's still there. I went to visit about six, seven years ago. The church is still there. So I went there. It's a different society and was real different from the Waipahu church. Then from there I went to Pā'ia, Maui. The church was little different. This priest was little different. I stopped going to confession. If Lord knows what I'm doing, why should I tell the guy? I figure, God knows everything, why should I tell him? That was my religion. I'm still a Catholic, but I don't believe in confession. I'm sorry, but that's the way it is. I confess direct to God, I don't need an interpreter or anything. He understands all the languages, according to what we learn in school, learn in catechism. So I stopped going to confession, but I'm a Catholic. I do everything else but no confession because God knows everything. He's the guy can forgive me, I don't need a lawyer. I don't need no help.

WN: How far away was your church from your home in Madeira?

MN: We used to walk everywhere. Didn't matter, when you were kid. I should think, come to think about it, at least close to two miles, within a mile and two miles.

WN: And how often would you go church?

MN: Every Sunday. The church in Madeira, we did not have seats. It was either stand up or kneel on the floor. No seats. I came over here [Waipahu], they had a seat, you can sit there. Another thing when we came here, they had children, everybody, all together. If you go fast, you get a good place, you can hear the priest more. But the priest used to go on the side of the wall, they had a little place there like a booth, that he preached to you [from], see. But when it comes down to say the sermon, he come out on the regular floor, on the altar. (Chuckles) That's the way it was. And anyway, we go to church every Sunday, if possible. My mother was very religious lady. Religion don't hurt anybody but it's good for kids to know all about it. When you're grown up, there is something—I learned plenty from religion.

I know what's right and wrong. I learned that from religion. And I know what's wrong with some of it.

And when I joined the Holy Name [Society] here, coming back to that, we used to—the altar—we used to have an American flag on the side, and another flag there, the church. I made a stand for this church here. That's down here now, the new church. Now they don't want the American flag over there anymore. Not allowed in the altar. And we used to take communion, they had a railing. You go up there, you kneel, and the priest on the other side gave you communion across the railing. That's the way it was, communion. Today, there's so many people going to church, they appoint a guy to help him, and he give you communion. How can that guy, an ordinary guy, never went to—well, they know what they're doing, but they never went and get to be a priest, and he can give you communion. I stopped going to communion.

If every Tom, Dick, and Harry can—I used to take that as the real thing, you know, put on your tongue. But I start thinking, eh, if anybody can go just grab a hold of Jesus Christ. . . . I used to think that was real Jesus Christ. We could not swallow, just let it go melting away. When I was a kid, I almost got choked sometimes. (Chuckles)

But that's religion. But I still think, by my feeling, I'm still a Catholic. I'll never change. There is lot of thing in that religion that is the truth. What gets me today is all the trouble, and all mostly the trouble today is religion. Where is all the trouble today? God was a Jew. He was a Jew. Now, people don't like the Jews, but he was a Jew. Another thing that lot of people—you see, the prayers, the Christian prayers, you take the Catholics, they have the Hail Mary. But the Protestants don't have the Hail Mary. They don't believe there was such a thing as a virgin. You know what I mean? They don't have the Hail Mary, according to what these Protestants tell me. Catholic kids didn't—my mother didn't want me to play with them [Protestant children]. "Don't believe what they say now. You're a Catholic." That part was all right. But after I grew up, what the heck.

WN: Did you folks have church activities in Madeira?

MN: Yeah, they had the annual things. Every saint had a birthday. Certain saint had a birthday and then they had carnivals and stuff, make money. It wasn't peanuts, what they call, this Portuguese, they call (*tremoço*). Lupine beans. You ever ate lupine beans?

WN: No. Looping beans?

MN: They call it lupine beans, they call (*tremoço*) in Portuguese. Lupine beans, little bigger than the pork and bean, but yellow. They expensive. There's some people in town make it. They buy it, they sell it. They boil it in water and salt, and put 'em in a jar. Used to be you could get it for two or three dollars. Now you can't get 'em in for fifteen dollars. Kalihi Holy Ghost [i.e., Our Lady of the Mount] used to sell 'em.

WN: But in Portugal, where did you get it from?

MN: Oh, that was common. That was just like peanuts. The meat is in there, you break it, and then you throw away the skins. It's lupine beans, it's a bean. But you age it in water for a week or so, I forgot, with a little salt. Some Portuguese, they do it here yet.

WN: What did your father grow on the farm?

MN: Oh, my father grew everything on the farm. We had a pig, for house use. And potatoes, onions, everything that grew, grew on the farm. Mostly potatoes and corn, cabbage. Cabbage, all year round. But the strange thing about raising the pig, you had a pig, you had to make a hole in the ground. And Madeira, lot of rock. You wall the pig up, the pig stays down there till you go slaughter 'em. You throw your food down there, and all that. All that leftover from the farm, cabbage, all that stuff.

WN: How deep was the hole?

MN: Well, when I was a kid, much taller than me. If I fall in there, I couldn't get out from there. I had to call for somebody to take me out when I was a kid. Maybe about five feet, at least. Down in the hole, so the pig couldn't get out.

WN: You mean the pig was raised in that hole, or just when it's ready to be killed, you put 'em in there?

MN: They leave 'em in there till ready to kill 'em. Oh heck, pigs, you can grow 'em in six months. I raised pigs for my dad here [Waipahu], when I was a kid, before I go to school.

WN: You know when you went to town, to Funchal, the town area, how did you go there?

MN: We walked down.

WN: How often would you go?

MN: You see, when we lived there, had all downhill, all down to town from where we live. All hills. They had a sled where you can go that was built with a basket. I rode one of those when I came to Hawai'i. My dad put us all in there, and we walked down to the wharf.

WN: Oh, drawn by the horse?

MN: No, no, push. The only guy that could ride a horse was the wealthy guy. And he passed by our place, we'd go run up there to see the guy on a horse. Must have been Englishman or something. Lot of English people are---when it comes to drinking tea and all, we were tea drinkers. We never drink coffee in Madeira. We're tea drinkers. We had tea on the table all the time. In Hawai'i too, till we finally got, little by little, coffee. I used to take tea. I used to work in the plantation when I was a kid, tea. All tea till finally we got grown up and all, we start learning to drink coffee.

WN: What kind of childhood did you have in Madeira? What kind of games did you used to play as a kid?

MN: Games, I don't remember playing games. Everything we did was maybe picking apples, or harvesting the potatoes, put 'em in baskets. That was our life. You didn't have games. Who you gonna play with? They didn't have ball games. My grandfather lived---like I live here---my grandfather lived, say, way down, it was quite a---we could walk there---maybe down to, further than the Times [i.e., the distance between MN's present home and Times Super Market in Waipahu, a distance of approximately two miles]. But was all on the hill.



Everybody lives on the hill. You live on the hill, the other guy lives further up (chuckles). They call it "hilly Madeira." Anyway, I don't remember playing anything back home. Everything we did was doing something on the farm or go downtown with my brothers, sell wood.

WN: Did you sell the produce too? The things that you grew, did you folks sell?

MN: Yeah, we used to sell. We used to grow corn and we grew wheat too. They had a wheat mill over there, all owned by the English people. You take your wheat down there, and you get it threshed out, so much a bag. You don't pay for that. They take so many bags of wheat, raw wheat, probably a dozen bags of raw wheat, you get one bag back of flour. There's no money involved, they keep. For their work, they keep all the other stuff. The fiber and all that, they do something with it. I don't remember. We never paid for that. I gave you this, you give me that.

WN: Trading, eh?

MN: Trade. That's all I could remember, I used to go and carry the wheat bags. My two oldest brothers, they did all the heavy work. One reason—I like to tell you—one reason why we came to Hawai'i faster was, my brothers, in a year or so, would have been inducted in the army. What they did at that time, they induct you in the army, they train you so much, they send you to Angola. Angola was a Portuguese colony. It's still Portuguese over there. [Angola was under Portuguese rule until achieving independence on November 11, 1985.] They send 'em to Angola, get their real training there. My mother didn't want that at all, and when they came around to recruit sugar workers, oh, she grabbed it. Not so much my father, [but] my mother, my brothers too. And my two older brothers never did learn. They learned to read and write here, but they never did get an education. They came here and started to work. They went to night school and learned how to write their names and stuff like that, that's about all. My two older brothers couldn't read a paper very well. I read it to them.

WN: Now, when you came to Hawai'i, where did you go first, immigration station?

MN: When we came to Hawai'i, we learn where is the immigration station from the boat. We were there, I don't know, maybe a week. I don't know how long. Fumigate the clothes, everything, in those days. Make sure when you come to the plantation, you're in health to work. Well, I guess they still do it today.

WN: How did they fumigate your clothes?

MN: Well, immigration station, they treated us well, because they had interpreters, eh. Portuguese—I remember now, they must have come from Punchbowl [O'ahu]. They had a fence, they come and talk to us. They had Portuguese [living in Hawai'i] way before us. The Portuguese that came before us, they didn't have too many in the plantations. The only ones that were left in the plantations were these guys that could read and write a little. They were all *lunas*. If you could read and write a little bit and you could talk loud and scare the hell out of the guys, you come foreman. I'm telling you. That's no fooling. "Huhh," they shout at you across (chuckles). So anyway, way before I became a boss in O'ahu Sugar Company, I already had my training from school. No yell at anybody, and all that (chuckles). You talk softly, they come close by, you get more results. (Chuckles) Funny, I learned that from my dad. He was very soft-spoken. He used to hate people that shout. But we came here, all these

Portuguese *lunas*, "Hey, you come here!" Oh, my dad, he used to really get all worked up over that. (Chuckles)

WN: What was the immigration station like?

MN: The immigration?

WN: Yeah. What was it like over there? Did they have bunks for you folks to sleep on?

MN: When we came on the boat? [MN is referring to conditions on the ship.] They had bunks. They had blankets and everything. They had these blankets that you get only about—I think horse blankets, the thing come around your mouth, you know. But you shake 'em, shake 'em, shake 'em, then you. . . . They had pillows and blankets for everybody. You see, we had one apartment—I call it apartment, room. Let's see, about two. My dad and my mother slept in the bottom one, then I had one on this side. Above was my three sisters. Then they had one on the other side for us. Four brothers. My kid brother and I slept way on the top one. Two brothers below, shelf like, you know. My father and mother, then above, three sisters. Big enough. Comfortable, only the blanket, you gotta make sure you shake it, because that stuff come out of the blanket, horse blanket I call that. Comfortable. One thing, on ship, they had no refrigeration those days. But they carried livestock, cattle, way in the back. And they used to kill one, I don't know how often, but we used to have meat twice a week. Fresh meat.

WN: On the ship?

MN: On the ship. And they used to have a gallon of wine once a week.

WN: How long were you on the ship? Do you know?

MN: Oh, we were over a month on the ship. We came all the way [from the] Atlantic, then up the Pacific Ocean. But all the way wasn't rough till we hit the Magellan Straits. Was rough. Yeah, was long. I slept all the way, and as I got up, the sun was coming in already. We got in there, I don't know what time we got there, but anyway I went to sleep. There was a porthole there where the boat, you go down, you see nothing but water, then up, you see the sunlight. Down again, I watched that. I watch that, I fall asleep. I used to fall asleep there, very, very fast. I just watch that. Whether it was a real calm day, or it was—you could see more or less, but when the thing was rocky, I used to like that. I didn't know what the hell we going through. Everybody prayed and everything, you know, because we go down, eh.

We were there I don't know how long. Anyway, after we pass the straits, everybody came up, all sweat and everything. All the women, wash 'em down, kids, wash 'em down, water hose, they put canvas, eh. Next guy, next guy, then the men and all. The toilet, they had a trough on the ship. Curtain and running water. You want toilet paper, brother, you better get your own, because they don't furnish toilet paper to immigrants. (Laughs) I never forgot that. Somehow when you brought up rough, you don't think about those things, you know. Somehow, you always get yourself clean. Till I was eight-and-a-half years old, I didn't know what the hell toilet paper was. (Laughs) I'm never lonesome because I watch kids and I say, "Goddammit, you kids have got it now."

But that's the times, I figure. Well, my kids, I try to give 'em all the schooling they want, but

they all quit early, got married and this and that. That's what they want.

WN: I was wondering, what became of your father's farm?

MN: Oh, he lost the farm. Yeah, he owe so much money and he went bankrupt. Wasn't a very big farm, only a small farm. The farm was only to take care the family mostly. His business was outside. People used to hire, when they harvest, they used to hire our people there, when they harvest potato or wheat or something. He just pay 'em with potatoes. But I remember they used to get forty cents a day. I never forgot that. They used to teach me Portuguese counting, count in Portuguese. When I went to school here, everything I knew was memorized. Everything was memorized. If you couldn't keep it in your mind, where you gonna look for it? You can't read, you can't find it, nowhere. So when I went to school, after I learned and all that, I say, "Boy, this is duck soup." That was a relief after I got to learn to write. What the heck, I don't know a certain word, I learned how to find the word in the dictionary and all that. But I tell you, I don't know whether I should jump, but while in school, my favorite subjects was history, geography and English—we used to call that grammar. Reading and writing and arithmetic was the thing. No such thing as math, or all the words we use today. And one teacher teach you everything. In the morning you start with reading, writing, or spelling, or composition, or history. And English was, we used to call that the English grammar.

WN: Now, did you know any English when you came?

MN: Not one word. I couldn't speak one word.

WN: So all the English you learned was at school?

MN: At school, Waipahu [Elementary] School. I wanted to learn English badly because the local kids here used to push us around, you know. They teach you some word that's not supposed to be spoken. All F-yous and all that, that's the first words you get to learn. You see, when I see these Filipino immigrants come here now, the local people don't treat the immigrants bad, it's the ones [i.e., Filipino immigrants] that are here already that push 'em. The Filipinos that have been here, and the new ones come in, they think, ah. They don't like the new Filipinos. The Portuguese were the same.

WN: So you got teased by the Portuguese?

MN: We were pushed around by the Portuguese, not by the Japanese boys. My best friends was Japanese. In fact, lot of guys, when they learning the trade and all, they even tell me, "You never learn anything from Japanese."

I tell 'em, "No, no, no. You're wrong. I got my start with Japanese machinists."

"Where?"

"In Lahaina."

Somehow the Hawaiians didn't like the Japanese. He was top machinist in Lahaina [i.e., at Pioneer Mill Co.]. And I got friendly with him. I start helping him, and he taught me this and that. When I went to Pā'ia [i.e., Maui Agricultural Co.], same thing. The best machinist in



Lahaina was a Japanese guy, his name, I forgot. And in Pā'ia, they had a Japanese machinist. He used to let me use his tools, he say, "You chop 'em like this. You do like this, do like that." But the Hawaiians and them other guys, they never teach me a damn thing. They didn't have too many Portuguese machinists. They were mostly in the mill. But I took up machinist. Then when years come by talking about machinists, I had a guy, Sadao Shinno, he went to trade school, learned to be a machinist, and he had the practice and everything. But they [O'ahu Sugar Co. plantation management] didn't want Japanese in the shop, machinist. Helpers, yes, but not machinists. So he applied for that. He used to ride bicycle [competitively] for me. He was top rider. He told me, "Eh, Nobriga, I graduate this year, how about give me a break go over there."

I said, "Go apply."

Then he went to apply. Oh, they never had Japanese here machinist, only helpers. Then I went to see the boss. And then he [Shinno] had a brother there that was in the office. He went to see the boss [i.e., O'ahu Sugar Co. manager], [Hans P.] L'Orange. I told L'Orange, "This Sadao Shinno went to trade school. He knows more how to figure sprocket, all the stuff, than me. How about giving him a break?"

"Oh, you're going all out for your pedal pusher?" I used to call the bicycle riders "pedal pushers."

"No. This is not pedal pusher. This guy knows his stuff. He can figure out the sprocket or the gear better than I can. He went to a trade school. I didn't. I learned the hard way. But when he comes here, he'd make a better man than me, because he got all the technology and everything."

So anyway, he [L'Orange] finally let him and some other guys in there. This is the truth. Finally we got one or two more after that. Then we got Filipinos in there too. I help the Filipinos too. Then at that time, I became engineer. I was moved to engineer, I had a little more pull to help guys come in. Then I got a lot of pedal pushers to become welders and everything, one by one, you know. "What is this? You going let all the bicycle riders around here?"

"They can do the work. They're not riding bicycle. They doing the work."

They all made good. Shinno made good. He made top machinist over there. When I was engineer, when I want the big work in the mill, I said, "I want Shinno."

"Oh, I can't give you Shinno."

"Well, I'll wait. Let him finish that first."

The boss over me, Charlie Cowan come around. He said, "How come, why didn't you bring a machinist here?"

"I asked [Frank] Crawford for Shinno, he said I gotta wait."

"No, no, no. You're not gonna wait. Frank, give him the man he wants."

That's it. After that, the shop foreman, when I go over there, "I want this guy."

"You went see Charlie Cowan again?"

"I didn't have to see Charlie Cowan, I'm seeing you!"

Because they thought I was mud in those days. You couldn't belong in the [social] club and all that. But today I got daughters married to *Haoles*, they different. Not all *Haoles* are the same. One of them can spoil it for a lot of people. Not anymore.

WN: Did you have family here before you came?

MN: Nobody. I had no family here. There were Nobrigas here, but no relation.

WN: Who came to pick you up? How did your father know to go to Waipahu? Or how did you get to Waipahu?

MN: I don't know. He just got in with other guys. We had a cousin came with us, Joseph, he went to Kaua'i afterwards. He came to Waipahu. He was [originally] from Brazil, but then he came to Madeira. He knew about travel and he asked my dad to go with them. But when we came on the train, we got down the station here, we were supposed to get out of the train, or something, rush, rush, to shift us down 'Ewa. Wrong place (chuckles). So nobody there to meet us. Then one guy came down from the mill. He met us. We stayed overnight in his place, then we came to Waipahu. Guy by the name of Freitas, I remember. I went to his place and sleep. He was a real nice man. He took all of us, nine of us—three girls, four boys, my father and my mother. We slept at his house and the next day we got on the train, came back to Waipahu. This Portuguese guy, we were surprised that he could speak Portuguese too. Pretty good.

WN: Was he local born?

MN: He was . . .

WN: Born here or born in . . .

MN: Local born.

WN: Local born.

MN: Couple of years after, he died, accident. Freitas his name, but I never forgot that.

WN: Let me turn over the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

## SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, so when you came here, where did you live first?

MN: When we came here we lived on Waipahu Street, where Nii Store is at today. Nii Superette.

WN: Nii Superette?

MN: On Waipahu Street. We lived there. They had two old houses there, old plantation house. We lived there. I'm not quite sure how many years, but we lived there for at least two years, until they made a big camp, Spanish Camp for the Spaniards, the Spanish immigration came in. So they had one house right on the main street, since this [first] house, somebody had bought the land for business. They gave my dad a house on the main street, brand-new house.

WN: In Spanish Camp?

MN: In the Spanish Camp. That's why we lived in Spanish Camp. Above the road was Portuguese Camp, above Waipahu Street. Afterwards, it became Filipino Camp.

WN: So there was Spanish people living in Spanish Camp?

MN: Yeah, the whole bunch of Spanish people came in, immigration [in the early 1900s]. All speak Spanish. I could speak Spanish with them, with the other kids. The language almost the same [as Portuguese], only it's a more colorful language. When the Spanish speak, they speak kind of sing you know. We say "bie-nu," the Spanish say, "nye-nyu," you know, the language is more—well, the Portuguese of the [European] continent speak a little different from the Portuguese of the islands [i.e., Azores and Madeira]. That's the difference. Talking about the Portuguese, afterwards, some came from the continent to Waipahu, and they thought they were superior Portuguese, "You from Madeira, I'm from," they used to say in Portuguese, "*continente*, I'm from the continent. You're just from the island." So they were the real Portuguese.

WN: They were like from Lisbon?

MN: They were right from the continent, Lisbon. Outside. Maybe not from the city, maybe from outside skirts.

WN: And they lived in Portuguese Camp or Spanish Camp?

MN: When they came, the Spanish Camp was built already, they went in the Spanish Camp. A few of them.

WN: So they felt little more superior than you folks.

MN: (Chuckles) But we lived on the best house on the street, main street of Waipahu, where them days didn't have automobiles, too. They had mules, eh. They passed down early in the morning, clanking, they had all the harness and stuff would change and all, they pass in front our house. You could hear them early in the morning. Five o'clock in the morning, they take the mules up to the fields to haul the cane and all. You could hear the chains, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink. You know, you could hear the sound. I never forgot that clink, clink, clink. And in the afternoon, around four or five o'clock they come home, I used to be in the yard. You could hear, oh, the mules going by, *pau hana*. Oh, that chain, *kuru-kuru-kuru*, that mule's running back, I'm telling you. I never forgot when I was a kid. I used to tell my dad, "You know, those mules they know more than a lot of people."

He said, "Yeah, yeah. They know more. Those mules, they're smarter than people." He used to tell me. "They know what is hard and they know what is easy."

(Laughter)

WN: Did the Spanish and the Portuguese get along?

MN: Oh yeah. No problem. The Spanish and Portuguese, they were really good friends. In fact, I almost—I had a Spanish girlfriend. I used to take her for like my sweetheart. I was a kid, see, sixteen, seventeen. Afterwards, this guy, Alphonso Guerrero, he married her. In fact, I got him to go with her. He used to hang around, real good friends, hang around with me. She used to come there talk to us. She kind of used to talk more to me than to him. Mama used to say, "I want you to marry a Portuguese girl. Don't marry the Spanish people. But it's up to you." She never forced.

So "Okay." I kept away. He married her afterwards.

WN: And he's Portuguese.

MN: No, he's Spanish.

WN: Oh, he's Spanish.

MN: He was from Gibraltar.

WN: And where was she from?

MN: She was from someplace in Spain. You see, he used to be in Spain, he go across to Gibraltar, he worked for the English and come back. He could speak a few words in English. Anyway, this Alphonso, afterwards see, he learned, he came in the [machine] shop, and I helped him out. We were good friends. His boy became one of my [Boy] Scout boys, Henry Guerrero. He married one of my nieces. But this Guerrero died in the Mainland.

WN: You were telling me that lot of the local-born Portuguese used to sort of tease the immigrant Portuguese? Did that happen in Spanish Camp too?

MN: No, the Spaniards didn't stay here long enough to raise their kids to be. . . . I don't think the Spanish stayed in the plantation more than five or six years. As soon as they had enough money, bang, go to the Mainland. By the time they were going to the Mainland, the Portuguese would be going already, way before them. I think was two or three families left in Waipahu, from all the immigrants of my time.

WN: Spanish you mean? The Spanish?

MN: I mean Portuguese . . .

WN: Portuguese?

MN: . . . and Spanish.

WN: So while you were here, you remember Spanish and Portuguese families leaving for the Mainland.

MN: Yeah. I stayed here---well, I just left Waipahu to go to Maui [in 1917] for about two years, or something like that.

WN: Yeah. Right.

MN: And then, when I came [back to O'ahu] from Maui, I wanted to work outside the sugar. I went and worked outside. I got a job---this guy used to be in Pā'ia. I met him Downtown [Honolulu], Capellas. "Eh, I no see you around." I pass by his place, "I no see you around."

"Where you came from?"

He used to ride a motorcycle, you know. And, "Oh, I came from Pā'ia looking for a job."

"Eh, come here, come here."

He took me down the shop. This was his lunchtime, I think. He got me a job over there. I worked over there little over a year, outside, machinist. The best thing ever happened to me. I learned a lot of close work, automobile work. I spent about a year outside of sugar industry, in that Pacific Auto and Machine Shop [in Honolulu], across the Kawaiaha'o Church, used to have a shop there. And I learned a lot over there. Then I came to O'ahu Sugar Company [in 1921], I'm still here.

WN: Can you compare your life here in Waipahu, when you first came, to how it was in Madeira? Which one was better, when you came here as a child?

MN: Well, when I left there, I was a kid, eight-and-a-half years old, eh. I don't know. I don't think I can compare because the life there for a kid, for us kids, everything we did was [to] accomplish something. Not to waste, we don't waste too much time in the farms. You gotta do something every day. You don't think you're working, but that's your job, see. Like instead of going to school, you're doing that. Like at home, you do the dishes every morning. My kids, I used to, "You do the dishes. You do this." All that stuff. But back in---we never did go to school, except we used to wait for holidays or go to church with my mother. There was no movies or anything. But I felt I was happy kid all my life there. I never got sick. I don't remember getting sick. I remember an incident that happened there. We had a kitchen outside. The roof was made out of---what the hell they call that---out of straw. Wasn't tile. The main house was on the other side, tile. Floor, everything, cement. Nice house. But the kitchen was dirt floor. Walk from there, that's where we eat and everything. One day, my sister and I were playing and my sister Jokina, she was two years older than me. We set fire to that thing, got fire on the straw roof, eh. And then, I came out, call my mother. Lucky had people, they were harvesting something over there. They came over there and got that thing under control. Then they put new straw roof. But when they came, I ran in the main house. My sister and I went under the bed, hide (laughs). I remember that. I must have been five, six years old. My sister was older. She got all the blame for it afterwards. They looked for us. My mother pulled us from under that. She pulled my leg first, was sticking out (chuckles). She look at me, "Who start the fire?"

"Oh, I don't know."

My sister, "I don't know. I don't know."



We didn't blame one another, "We don't know. We don't know," but you know was us.

She used to tell me, she was older, "You tell Mama," gonna beat me up, eh. But we didn't tell her.

Anyway, we were both to blame. We didn't get a whipping, but we went one day without supper. Just eat little bit, "That's enough!" We go to bed kind of, not hungry but you wish you had eaten some more. That's the punishment. "Eh, you had four potatoes, that's all. You can't make number five and number six." We used to eat a lot of sweet potatoes. That's the only incident I remember when I was a kid. The [only] trouble I ever made. Set fire to the kitchen roof.

WN: So you had straw roof?

MN: Straw roof.

WN: And the walls were wood?

MN: No, the walls were stone.

WN: Stone. Oh.

MN: The houses there, all stone. And then cement, eh. But the main house had tile. Good houses there, they put tile. The house we lived in, mostly tile, but they always have the shacks outside, kitchen. They don't put tile, they put straw, wheat. We had a lot of wheat, tie 'em up. But when we came to Hawai'i, they had rice over here. The Chinese raised rice over here. They had that straw. One year, my mother got—we didn't have cotton beds, so I went down there and get straw, put the straw in the beds over here. First two years, the thing soft, eh. After, the thing come lumpy, comes flat. And the first ones we bought, everything was iron [frame] beds. You didn't want to buy anything wood, the termites get 'em, before. That's the way it was. The living was, here in Hawai'i was easy living. But I was too young to---play, I don't remember playing.

WN: Even---what about here? When you came here, did you play?

MN: No, over here, we had time to play, but I always had chores to do.

WN: What kind of chores did you do here?

MN: For instance, we raised pigs. Then [when] we had a wooden stove, I used to carry the wood. Then I became like treasurer for my dad. I could read, write everything. I take care of the groceries. I used to go get my dad's pay on payday. He made me number one in the house, boy. I could read and write pretty good, and add and subtract. So I used to take care all the business. Afterwards, I took care of the bank and everything. *Bumbai*, they started an electric company in Maui. And somehow they sold shares to my dad. I must have been thirteen, fourteen years old, just little before I went to work. So he bought the shares. New company, Maui Electric [Company]. Lot of Portuguese bought and he invested \$400. And I saw the guys came, they gave nice talk, Portuguese. "You know, this new electric thing in Maui and all, you gotta get shares now, if you want to get this or that."

So my dad told me, "What do you think?"

I was young. I was in school yet. Oh, I no more nothing to say to him. I don't know about those things. He bought \$400 worth of shares. Then the thing went on for years and years. I went to work. I was working, then they went bankrupt. Didn't even get that goddamn thing started in Maui, Maui Electric. You know, he lost all the money. Afterwards, I went down, the company and, "Sorry, that was an investment," this and that. I knew more or less that by that time. From that time on, he wouldn't spend one penny without me. So I took over his bank book, everything.

WN: What kind of job did your father do when you first came here?

MN: Labor. Ditches. He used to make the [irrigation] ditches, with stone. He was good on the—put stone around that, they get the wooden gate. And from there, he did a couple of years, and he became bricklayer helper. He was good with the stone. He could get the stone where to fit and all that. You see all these walls on Waipahu Street? Portuguese put that up. They fit the stone.

WN: I see.

MN: And some Japanese, but the Portuguese were good with that. But anyway, afterwards I took care the bank. But he had a hard time to get money out of the bank. He couldn't write, he had to make a cross, see. So I used to take him down the bank and the teller, "Tell your dad put a cross."

I told the banker, "Look, how about my dad wants me to take care of this thing, this book and all, his money and all that. How about I make the cross?"

(Chuckles) He look at me. He asked my dad if it's all right. And my dad told me, "What did he say?" My dad never did learn English. "What did he say?"

And then I told him what.

"This my boy, oh, okay, okay."

(Laughter)

MN: So he made a—I told him make a cross. He make a cross, but he's kind of tremble, you know. So I kind of copy one as close as that. The guy look, "Okay, Nobriga, that's good enough."

(Laughter)

WN: But you knew how to write your name though?

MN: Yeah. He used to make a cross with me, and then I sign his name and I get his money. But he had to make that cross. But after I told him I'm going to take the whole thing over, in his name, but to draw money, I had to make the cross and sign his name. So from that time on, I took care the whole thing. I make a cross for him, same.



WN: So you learned math and English, like that, all at school, Waipahu School?

MN: Yeah, I learned all Waipahu School. But after I left school, I took up steam engineering. Those days, steam was the thing, eh. I took ICS [International Correspondence School] course, steam engineering. I figure, well, someday I'm gonna become engineer, one step up from machinist. I didn't want to be shop foreman. The heck with it, I want something else, you know. I wanted something where I didn't have to stay behind the lathe. I was getting where, the heck with it. I wanted to see how it feels to be a boss (chuckles).

WN: Getting back to the chores, you know, you said also that you helped your mother with the oven, the Portuguese oven. What was your job for that?

MN: Oh, I used to chop the wood. I chopped all the wood for the oven. You see, you gotta put all the wood in the oven and heat up the oven. You know what I mean? You gotta heat up the oven with wood. Had a big opening. Take the cover off, put the wood in there, and it start going. And she'd come over there and look. She knew when the heat was on. Afterwards, she figured that the oven was ready to put the bread in. She rake all the stuff up, all the coals, eh. She had a big mop like, she mop all the ashes out, as much as possible. The bread is ready to go. She get the bread together, big thing like this, with shovel. You put the loaf of bread there, put 'em way in the oven, eh. Pile 'em all up in there. And you put the cover on. Not closed, but you leave 'em so vent can come in. You put 'em closed, you burn the bread. So she put that thing, leave so much. Then once in a while, she go over there look, put the cover little closer, little closer, then she let it go. And sometimes she told me, "You watch the clock."

I used to watch. She had one of these clocks where wake you up with two bells, clang, clang, you know, the old clock, alarm clock. (Chuckles) Then I used to tell her, "Eh, time!"

She go over there. I take the big basket. And we had a shovel. They made one at the plantation.

WN: Made of what, wood?

MN: Iron shovel. Thin one, like a platter, you know, with a long iron. It go under the bread. The bread all solid already. Take about---some of them, the charcoal is sticky, just take the coal out. But that was some bread!

WN: (Laughs) I bet.

MN: I'm telling you! In fact, we used to sell 'em. I had a friend that I used to sell the bread [to]. I never gave 'em because my mother said, "We can't give the bread, because that's something we don't do. But he buy what the bread is worth." We used to sell one big loaf for a dollar. A dollar was worth a lot of money.

WN: That's a lot of money. That's expensive.

MN: Yeah. But the guy, this Japanese guy, Yasui's father, Johnny Yasui's father. He used to buy. And [another] guy, he died last week. He's my age. We went to school together. He used to buy. They had a little store up in Japanese Camp. I think he used to take care of the hot house. The old man lost his arm, eh, he used to take care of the---the old man used to love

that bread. He used to say, "Five dollar, ten dollar, no, I like." One dollar. We never sell bread to anybody but to him. One dollar.

WN: One dollar, that's . . .

MN: Boy, they used to---but the bread was worth about three loaves at least. Big loaf. Today, what, one of these [small] loafs, one dollar.

WN: (Chuckles) More than that.

MN: Not even worth one-half of that. But one dollar was one day's work.

WN: One day's work, right.

MN: My dad was one dollar [a day]. I worked in the plantation vacation [i.e., summer]time for two-and-a-half cents an hour. That's a fact. Vacation time. Twenty-five cents a day. But the twenty-five cents was worth a lot of money. I used to pay for food and everything. I used to wonder after I grew up, how the hell could that twenty-five cents pay for all that stuff. But the twenty-five cents and so on was it.

WN: Getting back to the oven, you know, was that a community oven?

MN: Yeah, the oven was built in our house. There was four people besides us take care the oven. The Spaniards used to bake their bread different. They used to bake their bread—I don't know. They never had an oven. They used to bake their bread, hard bread. You gotta cut 'em. Not fluffy. The Spaniard bread was different. Since we lived in Spanish Camp, they had one, two, three other neighbors, Portuguese, living around. They came in with the oven. Everyone get certain day. I had to schedule them when you can bake and this and that.

WN: Oh, you scheduled the . . .

MN: I scheduled that.

WN: . . . families?

MN: By that time. I scheduled. Oh, after my second year [of school], I could read and everything. You know, the common stuff. Schedule, I knew already. I could add, subtract, if I forgot something, I look in the book, you know, already. I thought I was a hell of a smart guy. I don't have to remember anything. (Chuckles) That's a fact. Before, if you don't remember, you lost.

WN: Were there times when two families wanted to use the oven at the same time?

MN: No, they had the dates. My mother used to pick a date. She always had a Monday or Tuesday. But anyway, if they changed the dates, they come and see me. Sometimes they couldn't make it, they change with one another, you know. But if she couldn't make on that date, they were very honest people, you know. They come around, eh. And see my mother.

But I'd like to talk about going to school. When I first went to school, we had no electricity. We study, we do everything under the kerosene light. That was rough. But when the

electricity came on, I already could read and write. I could go to any place, sign my name. I could read a lot already and all that. And when electricity came on, was one cord, that light over there, the switch, you know. Boy, everybody was really---“Eh, I got electricity. Eh, my house, I buy it first,” this and that. They brag, you know, the people. The women, you know.

Waipahu Street had the lights first. So we had lights. We very happy with the lights. Was plantation light, not from Hawaiian Electric [Company]. Plantation furnished. They had one dynamo over there in the mill. They got a little bigger dynamo there only for the plantation people. Up in the Japanese Camp, they didn't have lights too early, they had it later.

WN: Spanish Camp was one of the earlier camps that had lights?

MN: We lived Waipahu Street, Waipahu Street got the lights first.

WN: Oh, your first house, you had lights?

MN: The first house, we didn't have lights.

WN: The first house, when you came here.

MN: No lights. When we moved to the Spanish Camp, we were there couple years before we had lights. One year or two. Because I remember when we got there, I used to study under the kerosene lamp. My sister and I, one of my sisters went to school with me. The other one was housemaid here for somebody down the street here. And my two oldest brothers worked. Three of us went to school.

WN: Where was the school?

MN: Waipahu Elementary, Waipahu Street.

WN: Oh, same place where it's now?

MN: Same place where it's now.

WN: You didn't have August Ahrens [Elementary School] back then?

MN: No August Ahrens. August Ahrens came in---August Ahrens was the [name of] first manager of O'ahu Sugar Company. My kids went to August Ahrens. And then they went to---from August Ahrens they went to Waipahu [High School].

WN: Right.

MN: Clarence Dyson was my schoolmate. He became the first principal over there, Clarence Dyson. And him and I were good friends in school. And every time when we had history, geography or something, I really, really liked it. I was always there with the top. And nine times out of ten, I was always better than him. And he used to get a report taken home to his mother, and his mother used to really tell him off.

(Laughter)

MN: Clarence. I was friendly with them. I used to go by, go to school, go by pick up Alice, his sister and him, to Waipahu Street, down the old river place, Waipahu School, the old Waipahu School. We went school together.

WN: Did your parents stress education on you?

MN: My parents?

WN: Yeah.

MN: No. After I got through over there, I supposed to go McKinley [High School] or St. Louis [College], I was fifteen years old, eh. I [first] went to school when I was nine almost, and I quit when I was fifteen, eighth grade. I pick up fast, eh. Then I went to work [in 1913]. I went to work in the [sugar] mill, oiler. There was no such thing as child labor law. You big enough, you can work, you work. I was bigger than lot of those guys anyway. I went to work O'ahu Sugar Company that time [1913].

WN: Before we get into your work, I want to ask you just couple more questions. You were telling me about your house in Spanish Camp was the first to have indoor toilet?

MN: Well, yeah. This was years afterwards. Living in the ballpark [i.e., MN and family lived in a house at Hans L'Orange Field in the 1930s and 1940s], I had a toilet and bath outside, shower in the back, one little house. So I asked the boss to get me a toilet and bath in the house, but the house was too small. And by that time, I was doing a lot of stuff for the company, sports and all that, so I asked L'Orange, and he said, "You don't have it there, the ballpark, you kids gotta go outside at night?"

"Yeah."

"Why didn't you tell me this before?"

I said, "Maybe I'm not entitled to it."

"You're not entitled to? Of course you're entitled to."

"But I have to build the room."

"Never mind. You leave it to me."

So he went over there and built two rooms. One more bedroom and toilet and bath.

WN: Oh, this is not Spanish Camp, this is the . . .

MN: No, that was the ballpark. Then when I got that, this Bill Cormack, he and I are good friends, the guy take care all the housing. I told him, "You know something, my dad and my mother, they have to go out in the night if they have to use the bathroom, or they get a bedpan and do that, but they old and I live comfortable, my kids and all that. I wish that my dad had one." And I said, "I hate to go see the boss."

This Bill Cormack was friend of mine, he was a carpenter, he said, "I take care of that,

Nobriga. Just don't tell anybody."

He [father] had two extra rooms there. Cormack said, "If he has an extra room there, all I gotta do is move in the toilet and put in the piping." He had a toilet outside, you know, where when the hole fill up, just move 'em [i.e., the outhouse] away, make another hole, move the outhouse, then cover the [old] hole. Anyway, he [Cormack] finally went there and he put the toilet for my dad.

I told my mother, oh, she was very happy. Okay, then my dad, one day, I went there, after everything was done, he told me, "Eh, I never had a toilet in the house. I can't use this."

I told him, "Why?"

"Oh, I'm not used to that kind of stuff. You don't take that toilet away, that small toilet, don't take it away from there."

I told him, "Eh, wait a minute, Dad, when the hole fill up, what?"

"No, no, no, no. Only me going there now. Take long time [to fill up]. Don't take it away." He didn't want me to take that [out]house away.

I said, "I thought you saw the boss. I'm going to get into trouble."

"Oh, you don't have to tell him. Leave 'em alone."

So, I went to see Cormack. I told him, "You know what happened, Cormack? Now my dad don't want to use the toilet in the house. I wish to hell if you don't mind going over there, take that toilet [i.e., outhouse] away from there and cover up the hole."

He did. (Chuckles) My dad had to learn how to go there now, or else he had to use the chamber. He finally had to—oh, he got kind of a little sore at me. I used to go there, I used to tell him in Portuguese, "Eh, Pop, you mad with me? I know you mad with me, Pop, you never talk to me today."

He walk away, he shake his head. Afterward, he come around and laugh, you know. But Cormack say, "What the hell. I went all out for you." The next day, he took that damn thing away, Bill Cormack.

WN: You know when you came over here from Madeira, you know, you said you waited for holidays and things. Did you celebrate the same things over here that you did in Madeira?

MN: Oh, the Christmas, yeah. The Catholic holidays was the same. Only when we used to go to church, the church was different. Portugal they didn't have seats when we were there. I guess they have today. Didn't have seats in the church, but over here they did. They had nice benches where they could just sit down, you know. But the church over here was divided in half. One side for women, one side for men, the Catholic church. You went in, you sat on the men's section. But the women's section, women and children. Children could go on the men's section too. Little girls didn't want to go in the men's section. They go to the other side. That's the way it was. And then, the women's section was always full. The men hardly go to church (chuckles). I used to argue with them, I said, "Why the men don't go to church?"



"Well, men don't need it. Why you guys go there and worship? One man, Jesus Christ. So we are part of Jesus Christ. You women are the sinners." You know, just kid 'em.

But anyway, funny that thing used to get filled up, filled up, filled up. Finally they start saying, "Well, the two front sections, going to give to the women." So the men get few sections left. Then the third section, fourth section. First thing you know, the women took over and go sit anyplace. That's it. The priest couldn't control 'em. "Oh, I cannot start the mass until you sit in the right place." The women didn't move.

(Laughter)

MN: No way. They didn't move. Then I start thinking, Father, you may be a priest, but you don't know women. That's why the priest don't get married, Catholic priests.

(Laughter)

MN: And the women never go to church without a hat. Everybody had to have a hat. That's part of their . . .

WN: In Madeira and here?

MN: And here. But there was a neckerchief. My mother used to use that here for—she never did buy a hat. She always wore that thing over.

WN: She wore a scarf over her head?

MN: Right over and tie over here, go down.

WN: And tie at the chin.

MN: They cover their hair.

WN: But here [Hawai'i], what?

MN: Over here was hats. Some with all the old hats, you know. Yeah. Everybody used to grow their hair long. When I got married, my wife had nice long hair, and beautiful. The doctor used to admire the hair, they see that. They used to tell me, "Yeah, Lucy has nice hair."

"Yeah. I didn't marry her for her hair, you know."

They say, "I know, I know."

(Laughter)

WN: What about, now, Christmas? Was Christmas different?

MN: No, Christmas was a real celebration. Christmas they had a, they call that *lapinha* [nativity scene], they put the fruit, everything over there. My daughter in Mililani, makes *lapinha* yet. Only she don't make it exactly like the Portuguese. They put wheat in the cup and they grow it before Christmas come around. Then they put fruit. They had the infant Jesus in a little

box, you know, glass case. And then you decorate the whole thing, see. Apples, oranges, everything. But they have steps like, you know. They make it altar like. And put Jesus way on the top. And when we were kind of grown up already, I used to kid my mother, I told her, "Jesus get a little apron [around the waist], you know, little statue." Had a little apron. I used to say, "How we know if that's Jesus, we didn't see anything?"

(Laughter)

MN: So she opened the little apron and we all start screaming, "Oh, yeah, yeah, we believe."

So she said, "Not supposed to show you guys, but you guys been bugging me so much, okay." She show. "Now, you guys saw already?" She put 'em down quick.

(Laughter)

MN: After the holidays and all, she take 'em and put 'em, she had a little box, glass case, with a window and everything, beautiful. Jesus was always there, the whole year round, infant Jesus. In Portugal, had a crown, red clothes and all the gold, you know. Oh, about eight, nine inches tall, the whole thing. We were good Catholics.

WN: Did the plantation do anything for Christmas for the community?

MN: Plantation, no. I don't remember that. I don't think so. We had holidays. Everything was for the church. The plantation used to support the church so much every month, I think.

WN: But your social life was centered around the church, then, yeah?

MN: You see, we started a St. Joseph's Society here, and I started that. And then too much trouble with the Portuguese, I gave up. They folded up. I start saying, what the heck, I'm doing all this for nothing. I mean, little girls dress up like angels and all that, one of my kids went in that and they had problem, eh. I pushed my kids out. Bang. But they go to Catholic church today, not like before. They had a communion rail. They had a long rail and you go communion, you kneel down, they give you communion. The priest give communion one by one. Now, they don't do that. They had a communion rail, there's no communion rail anymore. Today, they have people helping. Everybody give communion. They have assistants, eh. They call 'em—some of them are made deacons. They wanted to make a deacon out of me one time, I said, "I'm a machinist, leave me alone."

(Laughter)

WN: Let me change tapes.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-55-1-93; SIDE ONE

WN: What about food? Did you eat different foods when you came here?



MN: No, same thing. Almost the same. Only we start learning how to drink coffee. When the war came on, then was coffee, but before that was tea.

WN: You mean World War I?

MN: [World War II.] Tea or chocolate. My kids went to school, all tea or chocolate. All my kids. When the war came on, they get boyfriend, or what, got married, coffee, coffee, coffee. They start learning coffee, I drink coffee too now. But once in a while, I make tea.

WN: What about some of the foods, like could you get sweet potato here? The same kind of sweet potato that you ate . . .

MN: They had irrigation camps all over the place, and they had so much land for the guys to plant potato and everything. You could buy a bag of potatoes for two bucks, dollar and a half, whole bag, about fifty pounds. Sweet potatoes. Yeah. Those guys work out there in the camp, they used to raise that. So when they start the irrigation different way, all the guys lost their job.

WN: You folks have a garden? Did you have a garden?

MN: In fact, when I lived in the ballpark, I had a chicken coop, out of the floor, raised chicken coop. When the chicken lay an egg, she never see that egg. It roll down in a trough. Where she lay the egg, get a little flap like that, roll down in the trough. Had a little window there, and it come out. And my wife used to say, "That's cruel. The chicken don't even see their own egg."

I said, "You don't want to eat that egg, I'll eat it."

(Laughter)

MN: I had chicken coop there. Then they start cutting all that out for health [i.e., sanitation]. But you had to have that chicken coop out of the ground, that's my time. The chickens . . .

WN: It had to be elevated.

MN: Elevated, yeah. All the chickens in there. They didn't want to raise 'em on the ground, so I tried that for hobby, and I raised ducks. They told me, "Get rid of your ducks."

WN: How come?

MN: They used to go out of the fence, go out to the ballpark. The guy say, "Hey, your ducks going over there, Nobriga."

"What duck?"

"Yes, your duck (laughs)."

Afterwards, I gave all that up. When the war [i.e., World War II] came on, everything changed. Kids go out one by one, all got married.

WN: When the war started, you were only—you were about nineteen years old, eh? [WN is referring to World War I.] When the war started, you were about nineteen years old. Did you have to go in the war [i.e., World War I]? Did you get drafted?

MN: No, the war started—when the war started over here was—well, I forgot the date but.

WN: Nineteen seventeen.

MN: The first one, I was in Maui.

WN: You were on Maui, oh, right.

MN: I was in Maui in 1917. I came back from Maui in nineteen—something like 1920.

WN: You didn't get drafted or anything?

MN: While I was there in Maui, some of the guys were coming back already. The war was getting over. But when I was there, they were taking draftees. I never did even register.

WN: Okay, you know what, we're going to stop here. It's been about almost two hours, so I'll stop here and we can continue some other time.

MN: Oh yeah.

WN: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-56-2-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Manuel Nobriga (MN)

March 17, 1993

Waipahu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Manuel Nobriga on March 17, 1993, at his home at Waipahu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Nobriga, we left off last time right when you were ready to quit school [in 1913] and work for O'ahu Sugar [Co.]. Can you tell me something about that or why you quit school?

MN: Well, when I quit school I wanted to go to Saint Louis [College] or McKinley [High School]. But to go to Saint Louis or McKinley you have to go on the train [from Waipahu]. And the train---it cost me to go, at those days, was three dollars and a half [\$3.50] a month. My dad couldn't afford that. I knew that. But he told me, "Well, we can do this or that, you go to school," he said.

I said, "No, I don't think so. Too much hardship." All my older brothers were working, my sisters were helping around, housemaids and all that. I couldn't see that, so I went to work. I wanted to work in the mill, O'ahu Sugar [Co.] mill. Those days they didn't have laws for the age or something. You tall enough, big enough, they give you a job. So, [age] fifteen I went work in the mill. I put in about close to three years in the mill.

WN: What did you do in the mill first?

MN: I started in the mill, just clean around for about couple of months. Then I was promoted to a oiler.

WN: What did an oiler do?

MN: Oiler take care the engines and all the oiling around the engine room. I was in the engine room. Then after I was an oiler, I went on top and became the feeder. Feed the mill, control all the cane that's coming in. But every year when they had a shutdown, we used to go to the shop that repair and all that. So I wanted to go in the shop and quit the mill. But they said, "No, you belong---you cannot get a job there. You belong immigrant parents. These jobs are for boys that were born here." That's the way it was. So anyway, I stayed around a while and I quit [in 1917].

WN: How was your English at that time?

MN: Well . . .

WN: Was it okay already?

MN: The English, well, what I learn in school, that's what I knew. I took in school grammar, you know, English and all that. I know noun and pronoun, or verb or adverb and all that stuff. Them days, English was grammar. Reading, write, arithmetic, and grammar. So I learned parts of speech and all that. I was very interested in that. But anyway, I left O'ahu Sugar [in 1917] and I went to Lahaina. That was, what they call that, Pioneer Mill [Co.] those days.

WN: How come you left?

MN: They wouldn't give me a chance to learn a trade. I belong immigrant parents. Well, that was the rules. Then I worked in Lahaina about a year or so. They gave me a break there in the shop. I had engine room experience. But when I went Lahaina they said, "Well, the mill people here, we have Japanese and all that."

I asked the boss, "I'd like to go in the shop." But I told him little bit of the story of O'ahu Sugar.

And he said, "Okay, I put you in the shop."

I went in the shop. That's where I started to learn to be a machinist, from Lahaina. Then from there . . .

WN: How come you rather have the machine shop than the mill?

MN: Well, the mill you just another guy. You just stand by and that's it. No promotion. Nothing. You just---if you an oiler you die an oiler. The best you can get there, you be the dike foreman, or the gang foreman or something. And the gang foreman is not a threat at all. So I wanted to be a machinist. And then from Lahaina I went to Pā'ia, Maui Agricultur[al Co.]. And I spent almost two [or three] years in Maui.

WN: What made you move from Pioneer to Maui Agricultural?

MN: When I was in Lahaina, I was young guy and I used to go. . . . Lahainaluna School for boys used to come down. They had concerts those days. And I used to like to dance. I learned to dance taxi dance. Ten cents a dance, Waipahu. So those days, they had concerts. All the girls used to come down and the boys. But they had lot of girls there. . . . I had a friend there (laughs) I knew from up school and I went in there and dance. And that's how I got to know all the people. Then I joined the Catholic. . . . In fact I was Catholic. I used to go to church and all that. In fact, I got so I was too much involved with some girls. I had a girl, my boss' daughter. And she was supposed to graduate school in Lahaina. She was getting serious and I wasn't. I used to take her to the show. Old movies those days, you know.

WN: What kind of movies?

MN: Robbers and Indians, Indians and robbers, that kind of movies. Old-time movies.

WN: Silent movies though?

MN: Indians, I used to like the Indian shows [and] a few love stories.

WN: You mean like Tom Mix?

MN: Tom Mix. Cowboys and Indians was the main thing. Anyway, I moved because this girl was flunking school or something. She had to go to summer school and all that. The old man was kind of number two boss in the shop. And he didn't like that. I moved. I wasn't ready to get a wife anyway. I had made up my mind. I wouldn't marry until I be matured.

WN: You were only fifteen, eh?

MN: At that time, I was about eighteen.

WN: Eighteen.

MN: But the girl was fifteen, sixteen, eh.

WN: Was she Portuguese?

MN: No, no. She was *Haole*-Hawaiian. She went by the name of Sherry Rickard. Anyway, then I went to Pā'ia. I could speak well in Portuguese then. I lost the language since my folks died. Then I got lot of Portuguese in Pā'ia. Then I got acquainted with those people. They used to invite me to their place for dinner and all that. I could speak the Portuguese. Tell 'em stories, my dad's stories (laughs). So they really enjoyed.

WN: Do you remember what part of Pā'ia you lived?

MN: I lived right by the mill, down in the gulch. I used to go walk home, lunch, and back. I used to cook for myself. Then they had a boardinghouse across, not very far from the mill. Lunchtime we used to go have lunch there, come back. Close. Everything convenient in Pā'ia.

WN: This was like Skill Village?

MN: Yeah. They had a real nice town. Lot of Portuguese, Japanese, everything. Anyway, then I got. . . . My brother started going to the Mainland and my dad got alone. I figured I gotta come back home. I quit. I quit Pā'ia. When I came home [in 1920] I asked for a job in the [O'ahu Sugar Co. machine] shop again, there's no opening. But they were building a new shop, so I wait little while. So I was going to the Mainland, my brothers were up there. My dad wanted me to stay back. All the boys left. There were four of us and I was the only one left. So they went to see the manager anyway. He made room for me and that's how I started. They said, okay.

WN: How come so many Portuguese were leaving Hawai'i to go Mainland?

- MN: Well, they came out on some kind contract. You put in so many years in the sugar industry, you can leave. You couldn't just come in there and quit. You could go [to] any plantation, that's okay. But you had to---your contract was for so many years. That's the way I understood it. My dad told me. So after they had enough money to move, they went.
- WN: But how come? Better-paying jobs?
- MN: Well, you know, those days when you're an immigrant, you're looking for a better place, that's it. They all went.
- WN: They went mostly California?
- MN: California, Oakland, all that area, Pacific Coast. And in the meantime when they [Portuguese] were leaving, the Spaniards came in, see. In fact the Spaniards were here already. When the Spaniards got their contract filled up, they also left. I never did live in Portuguese Camp. I lived in Spanish Camp.
- WN: But you didn't know too many Spanish because they were gone by then?
- MN: No, I---the Portuguese and Spanish almost alike. And the kids pick up fast.
- WN: Did Portuguese and Spanish get along?
- MN: Oh, yeah we got along fine. Portuguese, Spanish got along. Portuguese got along with almost everybody. In fact when we came here, Chinese were the cane cutters. The Chinese were the cane cutters then. They were all old people. Little by little they faded away [i.e., left the plantation]. That's when they start bringing Filipinos. But the Chinese were the best cane cutters at that time. But when they brought in the Filipinos, they were the best cutters ever, in O'ahu Sugar anyway. They use a knife. They really good. The first months were bad. They were from Manila, gamblers and stuff. Yeah, they weren't good. But they went down way in the [Visayan and Ilocos] islands there and brought the right kind of people [i.e., those from agricultural areas of the Philippines]. And they were the best workers, best cane cutters.
- WN: The Portuguese were mostly in the mill, in the shop?
- MN: No, Portuguese were mostly working on, like, ditches. They weren't cane cutters. They did everything else but not cane. . . . They never made good cane cutters. Japanese were the best, loading cane. Everything was loaded in cane cars by hand. And they were the best loaders until the [1946] strike came on. That changed. They start mechanizing the whole place. But anyway during the strike . . .
- WN: We can go to the strike later. Okay? So you came back and you wanted to work O'ahu Sugar again?
- MN: I came back, went O'ahu Sugar.
- WN: They had job for you in the machine shop?
- MN: No, I was telling you they finally got me a job. First they didn't have room, but when I got a



job there I started in the shop. The pump department. Then when the big shop opened, I came up to the big shop. When the big shop open, they start making all the big work [i.e., heavy equipment]. Mill rollers and all that. They made a shop especially for that. But nobody knew how to make a roller here. Machinists knew everything else but big work. So I came from Pā'ia, the foreman said, "You were working Pā'ia. You ever work this kind of work?"

"Yeah, I was helper. Complete a whole roller, bore, machine, the whole thing. Shaft and everything." And I had that job till I quit. Not only that, about three months of the year I was roller work, big work. After that I go everywhere. Milling machine, drill press, everything. I picked up fast. And during that time I took ICS course in steam engineering. I figure, I don't want to be a machinist all my life. My feeling. So I took up steam engineering while I was a machinist. I learned the principles of steam. What it takes to run an engine and everything. You come from the bottom up. I learned the operation of a steam engine pretty good. I took that for about one year, year and a half. Then I had to quit. I didn't have time because there were too many breakdowns in the mill. And every time they had a breakdown, they call me, see. I was living close to the mill and they called me. I was ready all the time.

WN: The other people that worked in the machine shop [at O'ahu Sugar Co.], did they have the same kind of training and background as you?

MN: Well, in the plantation all those guys had training except the big work. We have all the same training except the big work. The big work was something new here. But anyway, before I came from Maui [to O'ahu Sugar Co.] I put in one year in an automobile shop in town [i.e., Downtown Honolulu]. I learned lot of stuff before I came to the plantation. Anyway, all the big work I was more like a special. Nobody wanted to do it. Nobody knew how. They knew how but they didn't want that work. So anyway, after so many years I got promoted.

WN: Now, you told me that when you first came back from Maui, you didn't go straight to O'ahu Sugar, you went Downtown.

MN: I went Downtown.

WN: What kind of work did you do Downtown?

MN: Machinist. Automobile shop. Different shops. I used to do work for Von Hamm-Young. I used to do work for Schuman Carriage. I used to do work for [Hawaiian] Tuna [Packers]. American Sanitary Laundry. I did work for them. Wasn't a very big shop, but this guy used to go around, Joe Lewis used to go around bring all that work. When I didn't have that outside work, I work on automobile work. And I learned a heck of a lot over there in automobile work, the machinist part. I was a machinist there. I put in about year, year and a half. Something like that there. Then I came to the plantation.

WN: Where did you live when you worked Downtown?

MN: I lived behind the Blaisdell Hotel down Fort Street. I lived back there. Rent. Yeah, I go to work. Lunchtime my boss used to take me down to Boston Cafe, old Boston Cafe. You know there [Downtown], they had a Bijou Theater and all that.

WN: Where?



MN: Bijou Theater.

WN: Bijou Theater. Oh where was that?

MN: And Empire Theater, right Downtown. We used to go to all those movies. Anyway, I learned a lot there. That's when I came to plantation. But this plantation life was a very good life. In the meantime, I got married.

WN: Nineteen twenty-two, eh, you got married?

MN: Nineteen twenty-two I got married.

WN: How come you didn't want to stay working Downtown?

MN: Well, I don't know. I like plantation life. I like plantation life and my dad was. . . . My brothers after they left, my dad didn't want to stay alone. My dad and I were very close. So I came working for my dad to start with. Then I got in love with my wife. I married and stayed there.

WN: How did you meet your wife?

MN: I don't know. Just see her and I like her, she like me. I don't know.

(Laughter)

WN: Was she from Spanish Camp, too?

MN: No, she used to live in Waipahu Street. My wife was born in Kahuku and then they came to live Waipahu Street. I lived on Waipahu Street all my life, though. Anyway, my wife was only sixteen when I got married. I was, what the heck, I was eight years older than her.

WN: You were twenty-four, yeah. So when you first came back from Downtown to work O'ahu Sugar in 1921, where did you live?

MN: I live---what's that again?

WN: When you came back from Maui, you worked Downtown for little while, then you came back to Waipahu. Where did you live?

MN: Oh, I came back, I came to live with my dad.

WN: Oh, Spanish Camp?

MN: Yeah, Waipahu Street (laughs). That's part of Spanish Camp. I came to live with my dad. I stayed with my dad till I got married.

WN: Nineteen twenty-two. One year later. So where did you live then?

MN: I lived off of Managers Drive. Uphill. The road go to [plantation] manager's [homes]. Well,

when I got married they gave me a house up there. That's for skilled labor. But I didn't like it up there. Then I moved. I swap with a guy. They had two houses in the ballpark.

WN: Oh, Hans L'Orange . . .

MN: Hans L'Orange Park. Yeah, two houses there. We had two children. So this guy, him and I swapped. So I kept the ballpark [home]. And we lived there for almost twenty years.

WN: How come you didn't like Managers Drive?

MN: Oh, I don't know. I didn't like that place there. I wanted to get closer to my dad. My dad used to live over there. Four houses up above. I used to walk down. I used to visit my dad every day. Then I raised all my kids in the ballpark until the war [World War II] came on and all. That was the best move I ever made in my life because the ballpark, they [MN's children] go out of the yard go right on the ballpark. They had playgrounds there, swings. They had everything. So no problem. I raised my family there and the kids loved that.

And when they grew up, I got involved in sports. And I was made one of the committee, the O'ahu Sugar sports committee with L'Orange. I was one of the guys. There was five of us, we ran the whole thing. The whole, softball, baseball, whatever. Marathon running, cycling. I took charge of cycling. The company used to sponsor just the transportation, truck. L'Orange used to give me a truck to take care the cycling. Go around the island, relays or something, for training purposes. L'Orange at one time, when I ask him if I could get transportation for relays—you got to get trials and all that so I could place the boys on different laps. So he told me, "Okay, I'll give you the truck and the driver, that's all. But make sure when the boys go in the truck they stay in the truck." We took only so many boys in the truck, one [cyclist] was down taking the lap, [the next cyclist] gets ready to take the [next] lap. Just like running, but it's cycling. So that's how I got in to be—they finally made me president of the bicycle club, Waipahu Pedal Pushers. And anyway, the Takayesus, they had a bicycle shop, still has it.

WN: Oh yeah, Waipahu Bike.

MN: Waipahu Bicycle [and Sporting Goods] Shop. He [G. Takayesu] still has it. They used to really back up the cycling because that's where the boys got all their tires and everything. They were the backers. Anyway, talking about cycling, we took around-the-island relays championship, sprints championship, and around-the-island, long-distance, 198 [miles], I forgot the distance, we took that also. They had Mid-Pacific Wheelmen, Schuman Cyclery, and Waipahu Pedal Pushers. We used to clean up everything.

WN: Did other plantations have this kind of bike club?

MN: The other plantations didn't have it. We had riders from different plantations. We had one from 'Ewa, one from Kahuku to ride for us.

WN: For you.

MN: For us.

WN: But they didn't have a 'Ewa Plantation team?

MN: The other places didn't have it. Anyway, the [O'ahu Sugar] Company didn't spend any money. They gave us transportation and all that. That's all. And L'Orange, he used to be a cyclist himself. In his time, eh, that's how we got the backing.

WN: So tell me how did the competition work. What is a typical bike competition?

MN: The competition. We were on the Bicycle Club of America or something like that. Schuman had a bicycle shop. They used to sell a lot of stuff to the kids. And Takayesu, Waipahu Bicycle Shop, they used to sponsor. They used to give the boys medals and cups and all that.

WN: Nice.

MN: But anyway, this was affiliated with Cycling of America or something, I forgot. So we had a long-distance race to send one to represent Hawai'i. And we won that. One of my nephews, James Moniz, won the long distance. Sixty-two-and-a-half mile. Or fifty-two-and-a-half mile or something, long distance. He went to the Mainland, represent Hawai'i. One year after that they had sprints championship. His brother Raymond Moniz, they were good riders, those Moniz [brothers]. They went represent Hawai'i. Petey Schubert of Mid-Pacific Wheelmen, they always lost out. Had lot of friction those days.

WN: Was it mostly Portuguese?

MN: No, no, we had Shinno. This guy that owns this, what do you call, this big market down here [Big-Way Supermarket]. Shintaku. He was a good rider, too. Sadao Shinno---those guys died. We had good riders, Japanese boys. In fact, we had quite a few. We had Filipino riders. But these Monizes were outstanding. And they went there [Mainland]. They made good. The old man—I used to call L'Orange the old man—told me, "Why don't you go with the boys?"

I said, "You pay my days and all that?"

"Oh, no, no." So I never did go.

WN: I'm wondering, back in those days, the bicycles were not like today. I mean, they didn't have gears and things like that, right?

MN: Oh they had. They had different speeds already. They had some bicycles from France. They had the best bikes from France. They imported, Takayesu. They had certain race where they had a set gear. In other words, to give every boy the same break, that's why the set gear. You go on sprints and you get a gear. . . . You know, your front gear is smaller than the back one or whatever. The back wheel is gonna spin more. So then, set gear, they had rules. But anyway, these guys used to train a lot. Train and eat certain foods.

WN: This is when, 1930s about?

MN: That's before the war. I got a picture over there, but I don't know what year. But anyway, I had lot of cycling things, I gave it to my nephew, see. They took all that stuff away, but this guy Manuel Reis worked for Hawaiian . . .

WN: Manuel Reis?

MN: Manuel Reis. He was a long-distance rider. He's retired from Hawaiian Electric. He was one of the long-distance champions of Hawai'i.

WN: So you were president or head of the Waipahu Pedal Pushers.

MN: I was president, but the Takayesu outfit, Waipahu Bicycle Shop, used to sponsor everything.

WN: Oh, I see.

MN: Help us out.

WN: So it was like the plantation and the Takayesus was putting these on?

MN: The plantation used to back all that up, see. The plantation had their own sports, you know, in the ballpark. Plantation [baseball] league.

WN: And how did that work? How did the baseball work?

MN: The plantation league, they had all the plantations [involved]. They got a league every year. Waipahu had one of the best teams. They had one guy by the name of Henry Awana. He used to play in the Hawai'i [Baseball] League those days. He went to Mainland tryouts. Pacific Coast. But he didn't make it. Henry Awana. We had the local leagues baseball. Filipinos, Portuguese, and Hawaiian, Japanese.

WN: This is the Hawai'i Baseball League?

MN: That's what you call, the local league, they use to call 'em, Waipahu Local League. That's for men, the grown-up men. And at the end of the year, who was the champions. I won the championship. That cup over there (laughs).

WN: Oh yeah, nice.

MN: Kawano had a store over here [Kawano Store], drug store, [Kazuyuki] Kawano. He donated that. That's the local league championship cup.

WN: Local league meaning only Waipahu?

MN: Waipahu.

WN: Just Waipahu?

MN: Just the people---workers of Waipahu.

WN: And how did they make up their teams?

MN: Well, you make up your own team and you go whatever name. We had O'ahu Shokai. We had Hawaiians, the Filipinos, and the Portuguese.

WN: It was mostly divided by nationality then.

MN: Yeah, by nationality. And then the Puerto Ricans, five.

WN: So you didn't divide up by mill or by cane cutters . . .

MN: But [a team] didn't have to be strictly all Japanese [or one ethnic group]. But as a rule we try to keep it that way. The Japanese, well, "There's lot of Portuguese so why you go over there?" So they kept it that way. No hard feeling. They never had trouble with stuff like that. Portuguese, no never. We really friendly. No such thing as calling you this or calling you that. That wasn't allowed on the ball ground.

I was on the committee and I used to take care all the umpires or all the troubles on the ball ground. I lived there, see, so they give me that job. Any friction, I call them, "Eh, you guys won't want to have no more sports here forever you guys keep on going like that. Doesn't make sense. This is to play not fight." They all respected me, those guys. No problems. Oh, that was the main thing every year. They had the hardball and the softball leagues. Then they had the women leagues.

WN: What did the women play?

MN: They played softball and basketball. They had outside basketball, though. The women's league, they had the Filipinos, Japanese, Puerto Ricans, and Portuguese. The Filipinos always won the women's softball championship. We came second. Never, never could beat the Filipinos.

(Laughter)

MN: My kids all played. I had two daughters playing in the Portuguese team. We went by the name, we never went by the name Portuguese, we went by the name Fil-Americans.

WN: You folks were Fil-Americans?

MN: Yeah.

WN: How come?

MN: Well, we had some Puerto Rican kids and didn't have enough Puerto Rican girls [to make a whole team]. So we had some Puerto Rican girls play for us. And we had little mix half and a half, you know. And mostly it was Portuguese. So we didn't want to put the word Portuguese when we had all that mix. So was called Fil-Americans. Excuse me, not Fil-Americans. Latin Americans.

WN: Oh, Latin Americans.

MN: Latin Americans.

WN: And the Filipino team was called Fil-Americans?

MN: Filipinos was Fil-Americans.



WN: I see.

MN: Fil-Americans, I got that mixed [up].

WN: And Japanese were called Hawai'i Shokai?

MN: Well, Japanese was called O'ahu Shokai and. . . .

WN: O'ahu Shokai.

MN: Most of them were O'ahu Shokai. But they had one guy used to be on the committee. We had a committee, all sports everything in the plantation was run by five people.

WN: Do you remember the names?

MN: Yeah, I remember Charlie Cowan was chairman.

WN: Charlie Cowan.

MN: And then we had Tom Farrell. The committee was Tom Farrell, Charlie Kobayashi, he represent the Japanese.

WN: I see.

MN: And Frank Barcelona, the Filipinos. And I represent the Latins, or the Portuguese.

WN: And you folks were mostly managerial or---not managerial but regular workers?

MN: All workers. Workers, [and those] who live in the plantation. Because lot of them, their parents work on the plantation, [but] they work outside. But they could live on the plantation.

WN: I see.

MN: And we had people that used to sponsor. Outside people used to sponsor lot of stuff too. Like business people. Arakawa's. Arakawa's used to donate lot of stuff. Arakawa's was very good. Donate sporting goods and stuff like that.

WN: Who else?

MN: [K.] Kawano.

WN: Kawano.

MN: The rest, umpires, all the baseballs, all the equipment, O'ahu Sugar sponsored. Umpires work for free. Nobody get paid (chuckles). But they used to sponsor the grounds. They used to upkeep the grounds. But this committee used to control the whole thing.

WN: What was the name of this committee?

MN: Oh, I guess O'ahu Sugar. . . . Mr. L'Orange appointed these guys. Appointed us.

WN: I see.

MN: And we supposed to be the committee. Sports committee I guess. When it came to politics, it was different. Politics, they had two people [involved] in the politics. Charlie Kobayashi and me. I was in politics, too. I'd like to go back on that. They had politics here. On the election day, all the boys left the shop to go and vote. They gave 'em about half an hour to go and vote. But I didn't go and vote, I stayed back and I. . . . Charlie Cowan came in, my boss came in and say, "What the heck you doing here?" The shop was quiet, only one machine was running. "What are you doing here?"

"I don't vote."

"Why not? What's wrong with you?"

"I'm not an American citizen."

(Laughter)

MN: It was sad case. "Why don't you apply?"

"I applied already. I will be one in another year." I told him. "I'm waiting for the papers."

"Well, I be dammed. I would never think you would be. You speak better than these people around here."

"But I'm not a native born. I'm just one of the guys that came from the old country. I'm an immigrant."

He said, "Don't tell me you're an immigrant. You're my top man in this shop."

(Laughter)

MN: He kind of made me feel good, you know. But of all the times elections came around, I went and vote. From that time on I was a Republican. Republican committee. I was one of the guys getting all the labor [to vote]. Charlie Kobayashi and I, they made us two. They had contacts all over the plantation. By election time, they go out pick those guys up, come vote, take 'em back. So, election time I had two days off. For the Republican party. Nothing but Republican party in the plantation those days. So I was in the top committee. Kobayashi and I used to get two days off. They gave us dinner, put a lei around our neck. Hanging around big people, I felt real great those days. I'm a citizen. I became a citizen. The guys in the shop, "How the heck. Last time you didn't even vote. You weren't even a citizen. How come you a big shot now?"

"I'm not a big shot. I'm just a good American. A real good American. You guys go ahead and vote and vote for this guy. Be Republican."

(Laughter)

WN: How old were you when you became a citizen?

MN: I was twenty-four years old.

WN: Twenty-four.

MN: No, no. Let's see. My son was one year old. See, I got married in 1922. In other words I became an American citizen in 1924.

WN: So you were twenty-six years old.

MN: Yeah, I was twenty-six years old. Took two years, over two years to get all those papers and everything. And I went to the American Consul to get some information. He chased me out of there. He told me in Portuguese, "You come over here. You want to throw away your country. You get out of here." (Laughs)

WN: Oh yeah?

MN: So, I made a mistake. I apologized to him. I went down to immigration station to get that stuff. That's where for applying. Took me two years to get it.

WN: What about your father and your mother?

MN: Never did.

WN: Never did? They didn't want to or. . . .

MN: They were too old, eh. They wouldn't bother with old people anyway. Anyway during the war, after the war I had to register them every year in the post office. Noncitizens, eh. I go down there, get an okay, and send 'em to Washington. That's why good thing I stayed back. I took care of my dad during the war, and my mother, everything. Gas mask and all that.

WN: Now, this---let me get back to sports before we get into politics. How close was Hans L'Orange to all of this sports activity?

MN: Hans L'Orange was the best manager, I would say, in any sugar plantation in Hawai'i. He was a guy that loved sports and loved people. He wasn't one of these guys---he came from the ranks. When I first came to the plantation here, L'Orange used to ride a motorcycle. He used to be timekeeper. Go around get the time from the guys and bring 'em [time sheets] in the office. He was supposed to be a Norwegian.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, he was Norwegian.

MN: He was Norwegian. As far as I know.

WN: You mean, he started here a regular worker. He didn't come as manager . . .

MN: He started here as a regular worker. He used to be a timekeeper. He used to ride a motorcycle, go out in the fields, get time. That's L'Orange. I knew L'Orange. He was single man, tall man. Single man, kind of wild guy, you know. Friendly, yell loud, you know. I thought he was Portuguese.

(Laughter)

WN: Did he speak with an accent?

MN: Well, kind of little bit. But I didn't notice. But he wasn't---they had a *Haole* clubhouse. You couldn't get near that place. You not *Haole*, get the heck out of there. Before the war. Anyway, he used to go there for parties or something. I used to live in the ballpark then. I moved in there early. You could hear him yell, having a good time in the clubhouse. The clubhouse was next to the mill. There goes L'Orange. He's wild and single. As years went on he got promoted, you know. I don't know how he got promoted anyway. He married a *wahine* used to be, I think, vice president from Bank of Hawai'i, I think, Mrs. L'Orange. She had little Hawaiian. And when he married her---well, he didn't marry her then. He got promoted, promoted and he finally became assistant manager [of O'ahu Sugar Co.]. Then he married her. When he married her, all the *Haoles* didn't like that. You marry that *wahine*, got Hawaiian. And you got a big job. Why you marry part-Hawaiian? Oh, he tell. That was a rumor. The *Haoles* were strictly *Haoles*. If you call 'em Johnson, they say, "The name is Johnston." You pronounce it right. My boss was that. I used to call 'em Johnson all the time. I used to tease 'em, you know. "Mr. Johnston." He look (laughs). I used to tease 'em.

He used to say, "Don't you fool around like that." He laugh anyway. I used to---my big boss, I never care. I talk freely, eh. Sometimes they get hurt but I apologize. But I told 'em anyway (laughs). They know that you alive. I get a comeback for my men, too, sometime.

Anyway, finally he married her. This wife of his was good-looking. You could see there was little Hawaiian. Real, good, pretty *wahine*. Kind of on the heavy side. Mrs. L'Orange, she was a nice lady, too. Every time she talk to me, she pull my shirt in the back, "I'm talking to you."

(Laughter)

MN: I was always hard hearing. I never had this thing [i.e., hearing aid]. I said, "Mrs. L'Orange, stay by my right."

"Why, why by your right?"

"That's the good ear."

(Laughter)

MN: Anyway, she became really nice lady. After he married her, he became assistant manager.

Then this guy [E. W.] Green [O'ahu Sugar Co. manager], he got promoted. Mainland sugar people put 'em over there. He recommended L'Orange. L'Orange became manager. Then all the other *Haoles* said, "Yes, Mr. L'Orange," after that. He was a big boy after that. When he became manager, that's when he came out all for sports and loved the people. Actually his wife was the lady that probably changed him. Before that, I don't know how he was. But his wife changed him to treat people like people. And she knew that those people didn't like him marrying her 'cause she had maybe quarter Hawaiian or something. But she was nice, beautiful lady. She used to go and visit people. I had a sister that died, she was sick, very sick. She come and visit my kid sister. She was that kind of lady, see. She take it on herself, visit people. Hard-luck people. Family. She was a family lady. Believe in family. That's how L'Orange came to love people, through his wife. Before that he was just a wild guy, you know. When he came here, ride a motorcycle and all that. Actually lot of guys used to wonder how she changed him. One year they had a celebration that break record tonnage, you know, O'ahu Sugar. So he made a party, eh. Japanese people one night, Filipino people one night, Portuguese people one night. All the people who wanted to go up his place. Beer and all that. When I went up there, I thought I was going to enjoy myself. No, Mrs. L'Orange pull me by my shirt. "You take care this beer here, see that nobody gets drunk." (Laughs) So I had that job for three parties. (Laughs) But I liked it because they were nice people. My wife, I tell, "You can come with me to all the parties."

"No, no, no, I don't want to go there."

One party was enough. But he treated the---the people used to really like him. There was one time, after he became manager—I'd like to say this. They had a celebration, Fourth of July, and he wanted all the different people, different nationalities to represent. There was a Filipino representative, Japanese representative, one Portuguese representative to come out and talk. All the crowd came out, you know. You got to imagine all the crowd came out, big crowd at that day. He came up to me and said, "Nobriga, I want you to represent the Portuguese. Come out and give a talk."

And I told him, "Mr. L'Orange, I don't think I can do that."

"Well, I pick you."

"Yeah, but the Portuguese didn't pick me."

"No, no, no. They all know that you the best guy."

I said, "No, you think so, but lot of people don't think so. You don't know my people. You think you know. I'm Portuguese and I don't know 'em. How can you know 'em?" (Laughs)

He told me, "No, no, no. You the most qualified guy." This and that.

I said, "Look Mr. L'Orange, you mind if I pick somebody to represent the Portuguese?"

"Well, go ahead, go ahead."

I told him, "I'd like to pick Joseph Moniz." By the way, they liked him, they called him Joe. Joseph Moniz, been an old-timer here, been here down the pumps. They used to call 'em



pump engineer. "And I'd like to pick 'em. But I have to talk to him yet."

So I went over there and I asked Joseph Moniz, "Hey Joseph, how 'bout you represent the Portuguese? You like talk."

"What I'm gonna say?"

"Just praise the old man, just praise 'em. Someday he gonna be manager." He wasn't quite manager, but was already appointed. "Praise 'em a little bit. Someday he's gonna be manager. And the Portuguese people like to work for you." This and that.

"Okay."

So when came to Portuguese time, he came. He gave a good talk. Joseph Moniz. He died, the old man. Ho, that guy loved me after that (chuckles). Joseph Moniz.

WN: Now who was the manager before L'Orange?

MN: Before L'Orange was [J. B.] Thompson [and then E. W. Green].

WN: Thompson.

MN: From Maui.

WN: Did you notice a big difference in the plantation? I mean when Hans L'Orange took over was there a big difference?

MN: Was [J. B.] Thompson [1919-23], then [E. W.] Green [1923-37], then L'Orange. [Hans L'Orange was appointed manager of O'ahu Sugar Co. in 1937. He retired in 1957 after forty-five years with the company.] When L'Orange took over, there was a big difference. Production people were happier. Somehow production went up, people used to enjoy, used to like. . . . You know. Then the unions came in. And I didn't want to be in the union but I start thinking how the company treat me before. No fault of L'Orange or anything. My brother used to be secretary-treasurer for welders and builders in the California [i.e., San Francisco] Bay Area. Used to be in the union there. He told me about unions. So this [Hideo] "Major" Okada, he came and say, "Hey, Nobriga, how about we go labor school?"

I said, "Let's go labor school."

They [first] picked this guy, [Henry] Reinhardt. But Reinhardt didn't go. They pick this [Alphonso] Guerrero. Me and him, we went to labor school. Thinking about making a union.

WN: Okay, we can talk about the union next time, okay? Right now, I want to just talk more about the sports. You know, you said you had the local league in Waipahu, all the different nationalities. And then you had the plantation league. . . .

MN: The plantation league, they pick the best players from the local league. The committee pick the best players. Well, they go by the average, they make the first team. They represent O'ahu Sugar. 'Ewa, Kahuku, Waialua, 'Aiea, they had, those days. And baseball was so

popular, the Kahuku [Plantation Co.] manager used to hire guys that could play ball well, you know. And one year they almost won championship. But I don't remember they ever winning championship. We won one year. Most of the times we used to win. One year, I think, 'Ewa won. That was the real stuff. And they used to play against Hawai'i [Baseball] League players, too.

WN: Oh yeah?

MN: That's when Henry Awana---good players, [Manny] "Mousie" Ferreira and all that played for Hawai'i league. They were all Waipahu players.

WN: Can you play---could you play both?

MN: No, the plantation league, I was out. Plantation league, L'Orange, he wanted me stay in the plantation. Plantation league means you had to go out [traveling] with the team. One Sunday they go 'Ewa, Waialua, and all that. See, when you in the plantation league, they the only one that could practice and all. The ball field was open for them. After they practice and all that, then the kids and all could come in. But the plantation league was more like semipro. You not good enough, you can't make the team. They had some players like Henry Awana. Guys like that, some of them went to the Mainland.

WN: Did they go neighbor islands, too, to play the neighbor island plantations?

MN: Yeah, they used to go to Kaua'i. O'ahu Sugar went one time to Kaua'i. Spent a week over there. They did once. Half of the time the guys used to. . . . Too many parties, they never could win Kaua'i. They were invited to Kaua'i.

WN: And who was coach of the Waipahu, O'ahu Sugar team?

MN: Well, Charlie Kobayashi was one. He used to play and coach. Charlie Kobayashi was good coach. He used to run the Japanese league, too. They had Japanese league, too, you know. Plantation Japanese league, separate.

WN: So they had O'ahu Sugar Japanese league?

MN: Was separate.

WN: I see.

MN: And then they had the [league] sponsored by the plantation. When the war and everything came in, everything change, everything local. Sponsor your own.

WN: So before the war it was the [sugar] company sponsoring the. . . .

MN: Sponsor the big league.

WN: What about like---did they have Waipahu High School then?

MN: Waipahu High School. Not until they moved over here [i.e., the present location]. Clarence

Dyson was the first principal there. He was the first principal of Waipahu High School.

WN: Clarence Gyson.

MN: Clarence Dyson. D-Y-S-O-N.

WN: Oh, okay.

MN: I know his name because we were schoolmates. I could hardly speak English and I learned English from him, too (chuckles).

WN: So I guess living by the ballpark, you know, before the war, prewar time, you couldn't help but be active in sports, eh? 'Cause you were right there. Who were your neighbors?

MN: I had one neighbor. They [i.e., O'ahu Sugar Co.] had two houses in the ballpark. Then after many years they built another one in the front. The rest was separated. We were both, only two neighbors. My kids supposed to be the rulers of the ballpark (laughs). They say, "Oh, the Nobrigas stay already." I just told the kids, "You kids don't play boss around here or else." So anyway, every day I used to come home from work, the kids all gone and playing in the ballpark. Big ballpark. You saw the ballpark [Hans L'Orange Park]. The same place. They go play in the ballpark, the wife and I talk and cook and all that. Time for dinner, the kids still out playing. Almost sun going down. I used to go by the gate. I used to whistle (makes blowing sound). The kids way in the [other] end. I could whistle. I can't whistle with the fingers. Then they come down. All running back in the yard. I get a little strap, you know, the last one in I hit 'em with the strap (laughs). I never forgot that. They all run! They come back fast, you know. "The last one in gonna get 'em with this strap. Not too hard, but maybe!"

(Laughter)

MN: When I used to whistle, they take off. They didn't want to be the one to be last, eh. My wife used to tell me, "How did they get here so fast, how did you do that? When I call 'em they don't listen."

I say, "You don't know. You see this strap."

She thought of using that but never work for her (laughs). But I never hit them hard, the last one in, pack! But they didn't want to be the last, you know (laughs). That's how I got the kids in. My best life was those days with the kids. Then one by one get married already. I told my wife, "Don't believe that we going to be alone. One of them will be moving here." One come in, one come in, the other one, one come in. Everyone got married, I gave 'em a break. Stay with me a year or six months. Save some money, go on their own. Every kid did that except one. She got married in the Mainland, my oldest girl. Lonesome without no kids. Afterwards we got used to it. But then grandchildren come in. No problem. I never was lonesome, because I was busy with something.

After we retired, she [MN's wife, Lucy Perreira Nobriga] joined the Holy Ghost Society in Kalihi and she used to play music. She start playing over there. She was a singer. She played there for thirty-some-odd years. She get trophy and all that. I got all my stuff up Eleanor's

[i.e., daughter Eleanor Fulcher] place. One time when they gotta move us out of here, I move all the good stuff up there. I was going to live up Mililani, when I lost my wife [Lucy Perreira Nobriga died in 1987]. I was gonna live there. I want to stay. I didn't want to give up the house. So I didn't move. Six years already. They still want me to move.

"Why Dad?"

"Maybe I love Waipahu."

That ends the argument. Well, maybe I love Waipahu. I love Waipahu Street. I live there all my life. Unless I go back to Madeira, but I won't find it the way it was. So I stay here (chuckles). You know what I mean? [Because of the announced closing of O'ahu Sugar Co., MN was to move out of his home on Waipahu Street in early 1994.]

WN: You never visited Madeira?

MN: No, many times I almost went. And when my [daughter] Mary got married in the Mainland, my wife used to say, "Well, why you going to Madeira? Why don't we spend the money go up visit Mary and the kids up there?" So that's the way we did.

WN: Mainland.

MN: Mainland. Portland, Oregon. I don't like that place (chuckles). Seattle, Washington, I like. I don't know, there's something in Portland, nothing but rivers and bridges. That thing is plugged up with bridges.

WN: So when you lived at the ballpark, did you folks have outside oven or anything like that?

MN: When we first moved in the ballpark, we had a washhouse outside. Take a shower outside. I didn't like that. The kids had to shower and everything before dark and I had to be there. 'Cause people play in the back, way in the back. So after a while, I went to see L'Orange. And I told him, problem over there, small window, kids start climbing up, see my kids taking a shower or something. I told L'Orange, "They might climb up. And the kids in the night, they have to go to the bathroom, they gotta go outside." Good house and all that, I told him. "Okay, but that means you have to make another room."

"I'll make you two rooms."

So he made one bathroom and one extra bedroom. That's when I got to know L'Orange. Good man.

WN: Was he like that to everybody? Or did he especially like you?

MN: I don't know. I ask him for anything, he used to give me. I used to like the guy. In fact, for a long time I miss 'em, you know. He did so many favors, hard to forget that. I used to ask 'em for something, my wife used to say, "Don't ask him that. He won't give you." I go ask him, when I ask him he give me more. He was that kind of guy, you know. That's the way it was.

WN: Mr. L'Orange was Republican?

MN: Hundred percent (chuckles).

WN: Did that help you become a Republican too? Because he was one?

MN: No, you better be Republican. But there was a few guys there. . . . One guy used to say, "You are dyed-in-the-wool Democrat."

I told him, "Don't you ever say that. You better get this right. Don't you call me Democrat."

'Cause he knew I was real Democrat. And I told 'em, "I'm not kidding now." I got kinda mad.

"Okay, okay, okay." He used to joke all the time.

I used to work for the Republicans, but my heart was Democrat (chuckles). Because we weren't happy with the Republicans at that time. That's when sugar workers worked for contract and all. That's why. The Republicans did more for. . . . What changed the whole thing around was [John A.] Burns too, you know. Burns during the war discriminated against Japanese and all that. [During World War II police captain Burns served as liaison with the FBI on espionage matters.] That's what I didn't like that, too. That's what I didn't like. I was an alien, too. I wasn't a citizen. I was alien before I became a citizen. But during the war it was heck of a---hell of a time. Major [Okada] used to come down the ballpark (chuckles). Him and I---he used to take care Japanese teams, too, you know, him and Kobayashi. But he became a real politician. L'Orange---when they build the stadium, he gave 'em a pass, Major, he gave 'em a pass. You can go there free and take guests. I used to go the ball---watch baseball sometimes. I didn't have to pay because Major give me a pass. Major and I were close. We never agreed on everything, but we thought alike a lot. We thought a lot about human nature and all that. You see his parents, his in-laws were immigrants, too, I guess.

WN: And when did you meet Major Okada?

MN: I met him in about, well. . . . I think he graduated Mid-Pacific Institute. And we met about---Saint Louis and baseball those days. I used to back up Saint Louis. That's how we met, the sports.

WN: So besides baseball and cycling, bicycling, what other sports did they have sponsored by the plantation before the war?

MN: Well afterwards they had---no, that's the only ones I know.

WN: They didn't have boxing or. . . .

MN: They had one time football, but didn't last. Too many guys get hurt. It hurt the plantation (chuckles). They went on their own. They give 'em the football, but you get hurt, you don't go to work, that's it. You get penalized for it. Football was like at that, you know. Barefoot football, at that time. Didn't last, football. Mostly Puerto Ricans used to play that. But I never went for football. I used to go over there watch 'em.



WN: Was there a gym?

MN: They had a small gym over there. That gym, they had boxing at that time.

WN: Boxing.

MN: Before the war came here they had boxing in there. Training only, Johnny Yasui is trainer.

WN: What about basketball?

MN: They had basketball, but outside on the ground, the playground. They never went for basketball. They never have a gym, see. They had one place for small sports like training for boxing, that's all. But they never did have. . . . If you wanted to get a big hall, you go see the school principal. Go up there see the principal, she gave you the hall. You gotta take care the cleaning up, you gotta get the police come over there. I put on couple of dances there. Afterwards the second time, third time they wanted to put another one there, "No, I'm out of it." They went over there to see, Miss Nielson I think her name was.

"No, too much trouble."

"But you gave 'em to Nobriga."

"Well, that was before."

They never got it. Too much trouble. You have to get the police, and after the dance you have to see that everything is clean. Put chairs and everything back. And you end up doing it yourself. You get a committee, three, four guys. Lucky if you get one turn out. I gave that up.

WN: So did the plantation sponsor lot of social things like dances?

MN: Well, plantation sponsored---they had what they call a *Haole* clubhouse. They had their own gathering there. You could not get. . . . That's for the *Haole*. Filipino had one hall. We could get the Filipino Hall. Portuguese, we didn't have enough Portuguese to get a hall. So they didn't make one. So I used to get the hall from Frank Barcelona. In fact when I got married, and I had the dance in the [Filipino] hall over there. I had celebration over there.

WN: The Filipinos had a hall. What about Japanese?

MN: Japanese they had their own. The [Buddhist] church sponsor. The Japanese always had the church. The church and the church hall. The Portuguese---I had a dance in the Catholic church over there.

WN: Oh, yeah so the Catholic church . . .

MN: Yeah, this Catholic church, they have a hall there. Now you can't get it. Anyway, I went over there ask for the hall for dancing. And I told the guys I going ask the priest for the hall for one dance, Portuguese dance. Only one, once. I said, "If. . . ."

"You'll never get it."

I used to tell them, "How do you know?"

"You'll never get it."

I went and see the priest. I told 'em the Portuguese dance is not where you hold your wife, hold a women. I just dance with the hands and bow. You don't touch the female. I told him how it was. He gave me the hall (laughs). But the rest of the Portuguese Catholics went screaming to him afterwards. So the second time (laughs). . . . We went there one time. And then we had a collection. All the people---I think I got fifty dollars. I told him, "Well, Father, here's fifty dollars."

He said, "You don't have to pay me. I gave it to you. I like the dance." European dance. Dance, bow, and you can hold the hands, but no grab. He liked that. I gave the fifty dollars. He said, "You know, you want to put another dance like that, you let me know."

(Laughter)

MN: But after all the people screaming to him, eh, during the [following] weeks and all that. [The father] told me, "I don't understand your people. They kept on coming for me. I shouldn't do this, lend you this, lend you that."

"Father, I not going to bring them here again." (Laughs) So I used to get the Filipino clubhouse.

WN: Did they have taxi dancing over here?

MN: That's where I learn how to dance.

WN: Yeah, but they had it here, too, in Waipahu?

MN: Yeah, they had down the [Waipahu] Depot Road. You know the Arakawa's [department store]. Little bit below, where the Bank [of America] is now. Around that area. They had the taxi dance. Ten cents a dance those days.

WN: How did that work?

MN: Oh, they had Filipino music. [The dance] was run by Filipinos. I learned how to dance there. I was around sixteen, seventeen. When I went to Maui I could dance, taxi dance. You don't really learn, you know. Hardly any boys, they don't dance much. I got acquainted with a lot of girls over there. I used to love to dance. The waltz, the old waltz and all that. Anyway, I learned how to taxi dance. Was mostly mandolin and guitars. Five minutes [per dance]. They cut it down to three minutes (laughs). And the first thing you know the guys start fighting. "What, no more five minutes!"

"Okay, okay, okay. My watch wrong or something." The Filipinos.

WN: How did they tell you when time was up? Ring a bell or something or. . . .

MN: Oh, they give the sign to the orchestra. The orchestra stop playing (laughs). Everybody go out. That's the way it was. They all know. Everybody. All the Filipinos. They get tired playing, too, you know. They only too happy to stop.

(Laughter)

WN: And what, you folks had scripts?

MN: Yeah. Ten cents a dance, you buy. They had one or two girls there. Everybody grab [for] 'em, eh. So no buy too much. She has too many guys in line. But I learned how to dance. I used to take only those two girls. One or the other. I wanted to learn the dance. I used to go there twice a week if possible. Finally when I got the step. . . . When I got the step, I used to go there. I could dance pretty good then. You can dance good, they like that, see. They don't have to struggle, eh. You kind of take 'em around instead of she taking you around. And I used to go there, I show the ticket, smile and right away I could dance with them. After the music stop, they still want to dance little bit (laughs). And the manager go up to the girls and tell 'em off. "When the music stop, you stop." (Laughs) They kept on going little bit. Little more round. The Filipinos, they were strict with the money. Ten cents a dance.

WN: The Filipinos were running the taxi dance?

MN: Filipinos. Filipino music, too.

WN: And anybody could go?

MN: Yeah.

WN: Anybody could go.

MN: There's some part-Hawaiian *wahines*, but mostly Filipino *wahines* dance. That's the taxi dance. They [also] had 'em Downtown. When I used to live in back of the Blaisdell [Hotel], they had a dance hall down the street. I went over there taxi dance one night. I went in there, I bought two tickets. I dance one dance and I beat it out of there so damn fast. All Filipinos. But things were different. Money was. . . . I used to work for eighty-five cents for twelve hours. So when the unions came in. . . . Actually, people no believe, but people of my time used to go to work at twenty-five cents a day. Kids. For ten hours. My dad, I never forgot, told me, "If you work for twenty-six days, I'm gonna give you a whole dollar." So I worked twenty-six days. Always used to work, but once in a while I had one day off. But my mother heard him say that. Okay. Payday came around. I used to go collect my father's wages and mine, too, see. So I used to go up, get my father's money. Two gold pieces and two silver dollars. Twenty-four dollars a month. Sometime one twenty-dollar gold piece, four silver dollars, twenty-four dollars for my dad. So I went up and got my six dollars and a half. Twenty-six days at twenty-five cents a day, six dollars and half. So I came home, put the money in a little envelope and I gave my dad his money, and I gave him mine. And he count my money. "Oh, you make six dollars and a half." He gave me half a dollar [\$.50]. I put the half a dollar back. I walk out. I was walking out, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. Where you going? You don't want half a dollar?"

And my mother jump in, "You promised him one dollar."

(Laughter)

MN: "Why do you give half a dollar for? You blame the boy?"

I know he had forgot. And then he say, "Oh, yeah, now I remember."

And then he hold me and made me take the dollar (laughs). I wasn't gonna take it. "You promised me. I didn't care for the money. Was the promise!" (Laughs) That's the first time I figure my father promised me and he go back on his promise. That went on in my mind, you know. Goddamn what kind of old man I got?

(Laughter)

MN: In Portugal, the kids are trained so well. You get that kind. You get offended very fast. And by being that you don't try to hurt anybody else. Because you know you could get hurt back. (Laughs)

WN: That's when you were helping your dad?

MN: Yeah. I was in school yet at that time. This was school vacation, you know. And anyway, my dad used to talk about that after I grew up, you know. After he retired I used to buy him a bottle of liquor. In fact I used to buy him bourbon. Every month. He used to talk about that. I said, "Oh, forget it. I got the dollar anyway."

WN: We're gonna stop here and then we're gonna pick up next time talking about the war. War and the union. Okay?

MN: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-57-3-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Manuel Nobriga (MN)

March 23, 1993

Waipahu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Manuel Nobriga on March 23, 1993, at his home in Waipahu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, why don't we begin. Today let's talk about World War II in Waipahu.

MN: In Waipahu, World War II as I remember. In the morning between seven and eight o'clock, something like that. The kids were all ready to go to church. Then there's lot of people kind of gathering in the ballpark. We didn't know what the heck happened. We look, the smoke in the yard [i.e., Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard] and all. Then somebody said, "Attack, attack from Japan!" Something like that. Then a little shooting came in. Some plane came over and hit two people way in the corner of the ballpark. One must have died because they picked one and the other one they left him there. And I don't know what became of him. And in the meantime, some airplane or something there was a shot came right in my yard. I didn't know that they were shooting. I said, "I thought the leaf from the mango tree fell down." But afterwards I figured that it must have been a bullet. [Reports of strafing of the O'ahu Sugar Co. mill, hospital, store, warehouses, and cane fields were confirmed, as well as injuries. But no deaths were reported in Waipahu, due to either Japanese or American planes.]

WN: They actually hit your house?

MN: Hit in the---in my yard, back of the house. We were all there. We were in the yard looking out. And then when the guy got way in the corner, the guy got shot. Take the body away, everybody run away, went to their place. We didn't know it was the war, the kids were all ready to go to church. All ready.

"You kids all dressed up and all that. Go to church."

"Oh, they say there's a war, and all that."

"They not going to shoot the church. You already dressed up and everything. Go to church. God going to protect you guys anyway."

I didn't believe there was a war. All the kids went to church, they went to church. Never take long. They came back.



"How come?"

"Oh, the priest send everybody home because there is a war going on."

Attack anyway. And they all came home. I used to make breakfast for the kids when they go to church. And after that, the [plantation] manager came down. They had a clubhouse. We used to call it a clubhouse in the ballpark. We used to meet for sports and all that. At that time Johnny Yasui was training boxers and all that. I used to take care that---help him with the boxers and all. And he came down and he asked all of them guys to go in the gym in the evening. We all went in the gym. Used to call it ballpark gym anyway.

WN: Oh, there was a gym in the ballpark?

MN: No, very small place. Just a little building, small one.

WN: That's right, that's right. Okay.

MN: To accommodate umpires and baseball and all that. So we all went. Got together, got in the gym. And L'Orange came in and put the lights on. But closed all windows, everything. It wasn't strictly blackout yet. We didn't have no orders at that time. Then we got a meeting and all of a sudden got to the radio, or something, it said, close the windows, everything. Keep the lights low. And then L'Orange said, well there's a war on and everything. Everybody got to strictly blackout. He had all the supervisors there and some mechanics. Then he said, "We got to go around the Japanese Camp and tell the people not to get worried. Stay indoors and don't put the lights." So I was asked to go. The mill area, all the guys [living] around the camp close to the mill, I was the one to go. I went to Kimura's and different guys' place. And all those people were all worried. They didn't know what the heck to do.

I said, "You guys, we don't know what this is yet. You guys just stay indoors, cool head, don't come out. Stay indoors."

And they come out---they had some other lights, they knew me by the voice. Kimura came out, a few guys knew me. I went patrolling around the area, then came home. The next day everything blackout. We put papers on the windows and whatever. Then L'Orange came again. Had one more meeting. "Some of you have to go back to work in a day or two. Anyway, you'll get your notice." Then he came around and he wanted to pick somebody to go with him. He wanted to drive down [Waipahu] Depot Road and they had plantation police and all that. He said, "Oh, I won't pick a policemen or anybody. George Richardson or Tom Farrell, you're police. You guys stay there." He picked me to go with him, ride with him. "Nobriga, you come with me." So I went in his car. He had (chuckles) one of these revolvers, you know. It fell out of his pocket.

I said, "Eh, Mr. L'Orange, you got a revolver full of bullets."

"Well, you never can tell who's around. You hold it."

"No, I don't want to hold it." I gave it back. He put it in his pocket.

Went down the [Waipahu] Depot Road, to the railroad station. The railroad was running those days yet. Came back and he dropped me at the house. I lived at the ballpark, see. Convenient for me. I just walk to the gym and ballpark. So every time he want something, he just got to pick me. He knew where I was. And all the meetings was there. So I was always chosen for something. There were guys as good as me or better than me, but he just. . . . He and I became kind of good friends. We became good friends. He was a manager but I used to like him. We used to like one another. So anyway, the third day, he said, "You, you, you, all you guys got to go back to work." I went back to work in the shop. In the night, the whole mill and all run, but blackout the skylights and all. They put tar paper over that and all that. A little light---with enough light to see the mill running, rollers and machinery running slowly. They kept on running it slowly.

WN: They were still grinding cane?

MN: Still grinding cane. They kept. This was couple of weeks after [the attack] by that time. Then, I don't know how long it took, but few months after or weeks I don't remember, military [personnel] came over there. A bunch of trucks and all that. They took over the ballpark. I had the key to the gym so, "Who has the key?" I gave the key. [Boxing] equipment and all, take all that out. The army going take over. And they brought trucks. They call 'em motor pool [i.e., the army set up a motor pool at Hans L'Orange Park]. And they came there. From then on they stayed right through to almost the end of the war.

WN: How many people?

MN: Oh, they had maybe a dozen trucks and mechanics. And guys that drove the trucks, they were mostly transportation [workers] and stuff. But they had a few guards with guns patrolling right behind my fence.

WN: Did they set up camp over there? Where did they live?

MN: They lived right in the gym. They made enough room for them to stay there. It was about ten, twelve men. That's including the officers. Captain Homer, I knew one. He was a Mormon.

WN: What was his name?

MN: Homer, I used to call 'em. Captain Homer. That I remember. Anyway, he was there for quite a while. Little by little they start shipping different guys over. Different bunch come in and all that. I used to go there to the gym. I got to know the guys. They used to have baseball at the old termite stadium [i.e., Honolulu Stadium], you know, Mō'ili'ili way. Well, they used to have baseball yet, those days. They kept on playing ball after months or something. They had the Asahis and the Braves and all that [i.e., the Hawai'i Baseball League]. So these guys were in the ballpark. This was about a year after [the attack] or something like that. They wanted to go to a ball game on a Sunday. So this Captain Homer told me, "These guys complain they want to see ball game. Maybe I could let 'em go. Would you like to go with them?"

"Oh, sure."

So they gave me gas mask, you know the gas mask and all that everything. I dressed like a soldier, like one of them.

(Laughter)

MN: The wife thought I was going to the war. I said, "No, no, no. I going to a ball game."

(Laughter)

WN: You had a uniform?

MN: No, I had to put a khaki shirt, like one of them. But after they left, then they organized the [Hawai'i Territorial] Guard and all this stuff. That's when we had pictures taken and everything. Had all Filipinos and all. Drill every day.

WN: You mean after the motor pool guys left they started the [Hawai'i Territorial] Guard?

MN: Yeah, they started the home guard.

WN: So the motor pool guys weren't there for very long then?

MN: No, no. They went down under and all over. One of my daughters married one of them. Leo Gollnick married my, the one that died, Josephine.

WN: Leo Gollnick?

MN: Leo Gollnick.

WN: Did you folks get along with those guys pretty good?

MN: Oh, I had no problems with those guys. They used to give me all the beer I want. I could go visit them in the evening in the barracks. I used to go over there visit them. Drink couple of beers. Once in a while I used to sneak in a bottle of hard liquor. Those days I used to drink hard liquor. Bourbon. Once in a while I used to take a bottle. I make sure their captain didn't know anything. Some of them guys were human. Some of them were all like me, they were drafted, that's it. They didn't even know how to drive a truck. Some of them couldn't shoot a gun. But they were in the motor pool. So some of them used to drink and amongst eight, nine guys a bottle was nothing. So they used to drop beer in my back fence, canned goods. Everything was rationed at that time. So they dropped corned beef, pork and beans. They drop 'em in there from the motor pool. I had no problem with food during the war. I didn't have to go down buy lot of food. I lived in the right place at that time.

WN: How about with the [local] Japanese? Did the Japanese come around?

MN: The Japanese stayed away from the ballpark. Sports and all that was all cancelled. Japanese were very quiet people. They were more like sad. They weren't the same kind of people. They were so darned sad. Some quiet. They wouldn't hold a conversation in the beginning. Well, my helper was Japanese boy. And all the guys in the mill, well, no problem when we work. But they always were quiet and were afraid to talk in the beginning.

WN: So you mean after the war started they were different?

MN: When the war started everything was quiet. Then they start picking guys here to come to the concentration camp or whatever. They pick old man [Takeo] Miyagi. Newton Miyagi's father. They picked on him. Newton Miyagi, by the way, was one of the guys that signed the first sugar contract with me.

WN: Right, ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union].

MN: With me. He was a welder apprentice at the time. I was a machinist. And he was very angry about it.

WN: What was Newton Miyagi's father doing?

MN: Newton Miyagi's father was more like a big-shot of the Japanese society. He was the top man. They had one Filipino, Frank Barcelona, who was the top man for the Filipinos. Then the Portuguese, there was no top man. L'Orange considered me the top man. But I never was the top man. I never did want to be. I would never take anything unless I earned it. But anyway, complaints and all that he used to always come and talk to me about it and this and that. "Mr. L'Orange, I'm not supposed to represent the Portuguese. I'm an American now. That's it. I'm not Portugal anymore." (Laughs) I got naturalized when I was twenty-[six]. But that's all right. He come to me anytime.

"I want to talk to you." This and that.

"You know I've been branded as a sucker. Everything you know, they say, comes from me. I don't want that. I don't want that."

So, when he wanted to talk to me, he used to call me to go in the office. Certain things, you know. But the Portuguese never had. Nobody wanted to lead them. Who can lead the Portuguese those days? Nobody. Everybody is boss (laughs). That's the way I felt. That's the way they all felt. But anyway, after everything quiet down I became---I organized the Portuguese social club after the war, though.

WN: What about the Japanese, you said they didn't come around the ballpark? What about those [Japanese] that were playing sports? They didn't play sports anymore?

MN: They stopped playing sports till the motor pool moved away, then everybody came slowly little by little. We start making the---the plantation came normal little by little. Then we started forming local leagues. Japanese team, Filipino team, Portuguese. . . . I never went by Portuguese team. I went always by Latin American or. . . . One time I went [with] PACs, Portuguese Athletic Club. I got a trophy there. I don't know why. I think it's Portuguese Athletic Club. I took care that. Well, I didn't want to do it, they come and pick me. The guys, "Nobriga, come on. Help us out."

"Okay."

Then I formed the Portuguese Dance Club. Portuguese dances and all. A guy from Portugal taught us how to dance. And we got hold of few soldiers in the socials. Portuguese dance. We

got the managers, assistant manager. All used to come to our party, down the ballpark. I told L'Orange one time, "You know, everybody has a social hall here. The Portuguese, they left out. The Filipinos have one, the Japanese have one."

He said, "The Hawaiians don't have any." This and that. "You guys use this place. Take it all."

So I was in control of that little place for Portuguese. The gym. Then afterwards boxing came in and all. We only could go in there when they weren't training. See, Johnny Yasui, after he was a pro, he came to work in the plantation and he took up boxing for the plantation. And we are the amateur boxing. We had good boxers. His brothers and all used to box.

WN: What happened to sports when lot of the boys got drafted during the war?

MN: Well, during the war the---didn't bother because there wasn't enough [men]. Most of the guys used to play ball---I don't remember any of them volunteer. . . . There were quite a few volunteer, but I don't remember. After the war [ended], that's when sports everything went great. The union came in. When we got the first contract [in 1945] the company quit taking care of sports. The guys go on their own.

WN: Okay, so the motor pool wasn't there for very long. Only about one year or less than a year?

MN: Oh, about couple of years. Oh, I don't know, about a year or something. I don't know. I don't recall. Time was so fast, I used to work overtime and all that. And I used to go to dinner with the motor pool guys up the church. They had another place over there. I never was lonesome. I was so darned busy. I had no time for the family except in the evening you couldn't go out, that's it. And in the evening some guard coming down, "Mr. Nobriga, Mr. Nobriga. Hey, the boys want to see you there." Wants to invite me to motor pool, go over there drink beer. Shucks, I never was a beer drinker. I drink one bottle, I come home. My wife used to say, "Why do you want to go there? You're not a beer drinker."

"Well, be good to these boys. They go down under and die. You'll never see 'em again."

I used to tell her. And she believed that. So anything they wanted, "Okay, okay, okay." But anyway, talking about the war. One night---the motor pool was there yet---they used to grind cane in the night. But everything blackout. They had the locomotives up on the hill. And they steaming and the smoke came down in the ballpark. So (chuckles) one of the guards came in, "Hey, attack, attack! Everybody indoors!" We thought was gas. I came out. I told the kids, "Put on the gas mask!" All the kids put on the gas mask, everything. I came outside by the door. I said, "Wait, stay indoors. Wait." Then I came out.

"Eh, you not supposed to be out, Nobriga."

They knew me by name and everything. Then I smell, I said, "This is not gas attack. I smell oil. Must be oil."

And then I look, locomotives used to sit way on top of the hill, eh. When the mill grinding cane, they pushed the cars in them days. Wasn't mechanical harvesting, yet. They pushed the cane cars in. They had the fires burning. The smoke come down the hill. I said, "Oh, must



be the locomotives.”

Then they went up there. Oh, everybody got relieved. I was a hero.

(Laughter)

MN: And then I told the kids, “No, there’s no gas attack. The Japanese navy is too far away, they not gonna bring gas attack over here. They killing our guys over there not over here.” From that time, everybody relax. But we had blackout for over a year. [Total blackout was relaxed to a dim-out in July 1942, with further blackout relaxations occurring over the course of the war years.] When one of my daughters got married, the blackout was on yet. One of the motor pool guys. Yeah, the war was ending. Towards the end of the war. He used to drive a truck. Leo Gollnick. And then he wanted to get married before he go down under. I wasn’t for that at all. What the hell, you want to marry the guy? And then if he die, what? I didn’t tell her that. But I told my wife, “I don’t go for that.”

“The kid is in love.”

They got married. They got married in my house. And I invited a few guys and my boss and all kind. Some of them, they *Haoles*. *Haoles* were big guys. *Haoles* were special them days. Till after the war the *Haoles*, I think, came down little bit. You couldn’t go to a *Haole* clubhouse. You know, you not *Haole*. Anyway, discrimination was terrible. That’s when the unions came in afterwards. They listen to us. Anyway, they came in there and we drinking little beer and stuff. We didn’t have too many guests, but some of these *Haoles* were there. My boss and a few other guys. He said, “Nobriga, I see you got a picture on the wall over there. [Franklin] Delano Roosevelt. How come? All the presidents, you only have one? How come? You don’t like the other presidents or something?”

I said, “No, I have him there because he’s special. He’s the only president that talk about the poor people. He’s the guy that gave us social security. That’s why I have him there. The other guys, forget it.” (Laughs)

So they agreed, they agreed. They wanted to know why. Why that’s special. They agreed with me on that. And really I put ’em there for that. Then after things got quiet down after the war [ended], then we started make a union, sugar workers’ union [i.e., International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union]. That was rough.

WN: First tell me how you got into the Hawai’i Territorial Guard?

MN: Well, there was nothing to do. There was no sports or nothing around there. I gotta keep busy so. . . . They wanted everybody in. All Japanese, not one went in. So they wanted guys that knew Filipinos and all could get along. They ask me to join, so I went and join. Kill time, eh. You had nothing to do on Sundays, you go drilling and this and that.

WN: So this was . . .

MN: That’s how I got in.

WN: Beginning in 1942, September 22, 1942.

MN: Yeah, then we got the home guard and they had all Filipinos and we start all drilling and walking. That's all. Drilling and all.

WN: Mostly Filipinos and Portuguese?

MN: Filipinos and Portuguese and some Hawaiians. Very few.

WN: What about *Haole*?

MN: The *Haoles* were all officers.

WN: I see.

MN: All the top guys. Some of them were from the army, previously. They all became officers. That's how I got named sergeant or something, because afterwards they said, "Well, we gotta have somebody take care the guns. We can't have officers take care that kind of stuff." So they asked me to take care the guns. So okay, I liked to fool around machinery and all that.

WN: What do you mean take care of the guns? What did you have to do?

MN: All they issued was .45s. Automatic .45s.

WN: To everybody?

MN: No, to the officers only.

WN: Oh.

MN: The officers were issued .45s. Nobody else had a gun. We had hunting guns kept in the gym. I was taking care that. But they never used those guns. Repeaters, for shoot birds. They had couple of dozen of that. And we had that in the gym. They assigned me to that. But the officers could go and shoot, practice, you know. I also had the bullets in the gym, ammunition in the gym. So the first time they went shooting, "Eh, we going shooting Sunday." Half a dozen officers wanted to go and I went to the gym, gave 'em the gun and the bullets and all that. They all went. The following week they---more officers wanted to go. And they came and see me. I'm thinking to myself, what the hell, I take care every goddamn thing and I not allowed a gun.

So I told 'em, "You guys want to get the gun and all that, here's the key. I quit."

"Hey, you can't quit."

"No, I quit! If I can take care guns and take care ammunitions, issue everything, I can't go with you guys and shoot? I don't want that. I don't want the job." (Laughs)

Then they got together, "Wait a minute now. No quit, no quit. You can come. You can shoot."

But I already had a gun at home, but no bullets. I practice to take 'em apart, put 'em back in one minute. But then they told me, "You can do it in one minute, you supposed to be able to

do it in one minute with your eyes closed.”

I told 'em, “Eh, nobody does that.”

“They do it in the army, some. The .45.”

So I told 'em, “Well, I want to keep this gun home. I'll practice. No ammunition though.”

Bring the gun home. I practice for one week. I got so I could make 'em in one minute. And they didn't believe me. Finally one day, I demonstrate to them. Take 'em apart, bring 'em all back. I used to make 'em in one minute. My hands were good then. Then I used to go shoot with them.

WN: Where did you go shoot?

MN: Up in the cane fields, way up, where they had the pump. They used to go shoot over there.

But I joined everything because everything was. . . . I wasn't lonely with sports and all that. When I wasn't working I had to do something. Then I got into social Portuguese clubs and all that. Then when I retired [in 1963], after many years, I promised my wife, “From now on, I go every place where you go. Everything you do I go. I go with you.” She didn't believe me, you know, because I never was home.

(Laughter)

MN: This, that, this and that. So when I retired—she used to sing and all that. She used to sing in Kalihi Holy Ghost. She loved singing. So I went. And I took care her for the rest. . . . When I retired, until she died, I went everywhere with her. I said, “You don't do no breakfast. You don't do no lunch.” But she used to do the lunch anyway. But breakfast, my wife never did—I never did let her make breakfast for me. Always did my own, even when I used to work. That's why I used to fix my breakfast and fix their breakfast and go to work.

But I hardly spent time with my family before I retired. I was always with this or that or this or that. Sports, around-the-island relays, cycling, all that. I was involved in every goddamn thing. One or the other. L'Orange gave me a truck, gave me car, gave me a chauffeur. “Go here, take care this.” I used to go. I used to love that.

“Where you going again?”

“Well, you can't have a good house and paint and all that if you don't do these things for the company (chuckles). If you want something you gotta sacrifice, too.” I realize that. Politics, I was involved. I tell you, I was involved in everything. The old man (chuckles) used to come and see me.

WN: What were some of your [wartime] duties besides watching the guns for the home guard?

MN: Nothing. Just make sure that the guns were returned by the officers, were clean and all that. But we just kept 'em in the locker. We had all the guns in there and the motor pool was there. Nobody could go in there for those guns except me. The motor pool, Captain Homer, they knew me and I had free passage anytime. I could go in or out. All the guys knew me.

New bunch used to come in, eh. Captain used to take me. . . . Well, the last captain was, I forgot his name now. He was there only short time. But I got introduced to him too. This one captain I used to know, Homer, he was a Mormon. He was there quite a while. On Sundays, all my kids used to get ready to go to church, dress up and everything, and my wife, they all go to church. They walk to church. Farrington Highway, the church is still there, St. Joseph's Church. And this guy [Homer], he called me one day, he said, "Nobriga, I see your family go to church. I like that. Your wife, all the kids. Don't you ever go to church?"

I told him, "Well captain, I don't need it."

"Why?"

"Well, I don't need it. I don't feel like it. I take care the kids and all that. They need it. I send 'em. 'Cause they got to learn like I did. But I don't need it anymore."

"Oh, you must be wrong."

"Well, that's the way I think." I told him, "That doesn't mean that I'm afraid of Jesus Christ." I respect and all that. That's my religion but. . . . When my dad was eighty years old, he stopped going to church. And the priest came down there and told my dad, "That's okay. As long as you believe in God, that's okay."

So that in my mind, I was in my fifties, I never go to church already. So I never did go to church after that. But after I retired I start going to church. In Lahaina, I went to church. And I met lot of people. And some *wahines*, too, going to church. And I joined Holy Name Society and I joined all kind of religious organizations. I join the Holy Name here, I join Sacred Heart of Jesus in Lahaina. Pā'ia, I didn't join anything but I used to go to church there once in a while. Pā'ia wasn't too active. When I came back from Maui I joined all the organizations here. This was years after, though. I was a Holy Name man and all that. I still support the church. They had a drive the other day for schools and all that. You can pay in three or four payments. I joined that. Cost me about \$150. I subscribe to the *Catholic Herald*. I keep in touch all the time. I know what's going on in the church more than those who go to church. They go to church and that's enough. They don't read, they don't do anything. God forgive 'em for everything because they went to church. I used to think like that.

WN: In the Territorial Guard, did you go on any patrols or anything like that?

MN: During the war, I never did go. They used to get guys going to patrol for blackouts and all. I never did go. I had no time, because I was excused. Little breakdown, anything break in the factory [i.e., sugar mill] or something, I was the target. I live right close.

WN: I see.

MN: So. . . .

WN: So the guard was more for when you weren't working?

MN: The labor was frozen and I lived close and I was the guy, the machinist. I had experience from outside. I worked outside a few years as a machinist. I did work for Von Hamm-Young,

automobile shops, [Hawaiian] Tuna Packers [Limited], City and County [of Honolulu]. I had good experience outside. I went out for little over a year. Then I came back to the plantation again. But I never went and guarded, because the manager used to pick guys. You guys go guard and all that. Blackout, make sure the lights are all out and this and that. One guy used to live next to me, [Frank] Gouveia (laughs). He used to go out, by the garage outside, and the kids put on the light. He go around raise hell with everybody, "Put out your lights!" He was a funny guy. I used to like him, but he never mess around me. He was my neighbor, but everything he sees, he see the boss. The boss never liked him for that.

"Why don't you tell Gouveia to keep his mouth shut. I don't want to know anything from him. When I want to know something I want it from you."

"Eh, I'm not telling you everything." I tell the boss (chuckles).

"I know, that's why I like you. When you tell me something, it's for real."

I said, "Of course it's for real. Mostly for me when I tell you something. Not somebody else." He used to get a kick out of that. So anyway---Gouveia noticed that the lights was on. He went out and I waited for him when he came back. He come back after about half an hour, hour patrol. He come back. And before he got in the front, I said, "Frank, you go around telling everybody put out their lights. You better put out your lights."

"What?"

"Go look in the back."

The light was on. He went in and he raised holy hell with the wife and the kids, you know. Big racket. And then I told him, "Don't blame your wife. Take the goddamn globe off, then she won't put 'em on anymore."

"Oh, but the switch there, they forget."

"Take the bulb off."

"Fine."

"You don't need it in the night. It's blackout anyway."

"Yeah, yeah. I never think about that."

So he took the bulb out. He was raising hell with everybody. He was this kind of guys say, "Hey, what you got your light on for? You don't know there's a war on?" Oh, raise hell with the people. But his own place the light was on.

WN: You told me plantation workers were frozen?

MN: The labor was . . .

WN: They didn't move around too much to other plantations or jobs?



- MN: The plantation, they froze the labor. Had lot of guys running to navy yard [i.e., Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard] and this and that. They were draining the plantation for little experience, welders, carpenters. One machinist went there.
- WN: Could they go?
- MN: One machinist went there. One went there. He wasn't quite a machinist. He was apprentice yet. When they start taking welders and all that, they closed the labor in the plantation. Any skilled labor or anybody want to go navy yard had to get an okay. 'Cause they [plantation] needed all that [labor]. [On O'ahu, plantation labor was not frozen, but the military services and their contractors informally agreed, in return for the loan of plantation workers, not to hire anyone known to be a plantation employee.]
- WN: What about you? Did you ever think about . . .
- MN: I was frozen from the beginning.
- WN: Did you want to go?
- MN: No, I didn't want to go. I was at a comfortable place.
- WN: There were some people who went to Pearl Harbor navy yard?
- MN: They went. Some went. Quite a few.
- WN: This was before they froze? They froze the labor.
- MN: Yeah, a few went. Quite a few. Some even ordinary labor got jobs over there. Some of them went pick up some dead [after December 7]. Guy got a job there picking up the dead.
- WN: Did they pay more?
- MN: Oh, they were special. Had one guy, I forgot his name. Portuguese guy lived down the alley there. He died afterwards from picking up the dead. He got kind of disease.
- WN: Was the pay better?
- MN: He never did get better.
- WN: No, was the pay better?
- MN: Oh, yeah pick up the dead (laughs), you get more than a mechanic's pay. He did that for about five, six months. He made enough money to build a house down the corner.
- WN: What about a welder on the plantation compared to a welder at the navy yard? Was there a big difference in pay?
- MN: Oh yeah. From the plantation to the navy yard three times more money than the plantation.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, so three times more money.

MN: Yeah. One of my nephews, Raymond Moniz, I told him, "Go apply fast before you get frozen." He was pretty good welder already. He went down the [navy] yard. And he made real good over there. Top pay, big pay, I don't know what was top pay was down there, but. . . . Three times more than what he was making in the plantation. And he finally made certified welder. He made one of top welders. They sent 'em to the Mainland, train 'em some more, bring 'em back. They had another guy used to be plumber here, the same thing. They train 'em. They had the start, but they want to make 'em full-fledged. Send 'em there, bring 'em back. My nephew, Raymond, he made certified welder. [When] they used to have boats in trouble, submarines, way down, way back, somewhere, where they gotta go down in the hole and weld or something, only certified welder could go down there, do that kind of work. They used to pick 'em down there. Fly 'em over and all that. Take 'em there, bring 'em back. Special pay. He made enough money, he moved to the Mainland. He bought a home in the Mainland. This Raymond Moniz, my nephew, he was a cyclist at that time. Well, he made junior champion Hawai'i, sprints championship, he went for trial in the Mainland. Represent the cycle league of America or something. He went over there for sprint, he didn't make it. His brother also went, but was for long distance. He didn't make it. They had too many riders up there better than them. But this Raymond made one of the best. Then had one other guy, he became top man on plumbing. From the plantation he went down there, they send 'em to school, he's retired. They all retired with good retirement [benefits] from the shipyard.

WN: So how long into the war, how many months went by into the war did they freeze the position? I mean, as soon as the war broke out, is that when Moniz those guys went to. . . .

MN: The war was on yet. They need lot of people there because boats were there and lot of trouble down the yard from the attack, eh. They were looking for any kind of help down there.

WN: How did they find out about the openings in the navy yard?

MN: Oh, the newspapers. Newspapers. They looking for apply. They need this, they need that. They needed all skill mechanics everywhere. I was frozen. I stayed back, but I used to do work for military, through a contractor.

WN: Oh, what was that?

MN: The boss allowed two machinists, Lino Souza and I, we were top machinists then, can do any work that can be done in the plantation. If you can do it, the money is for you. We couldn't go down there [navy yard], we were frozen. The wages were set, eh. So I used to do work for a contractor. Hydraulic lines, you know. Four-inch, three-inch fittings. Nut, male and female nut, where they put the water hose, you know. So they used to get those. They bring those casted. Then you had to machine 'em, straight 'em. Male and female. So this contractor

brought 'em over and they asked me how much would I charge for one. After work, overtime, we go on our own. The company said, you could use the machine and all that. The manager said it's okay. First one I took I said, "Wait, how much is the pay an hour [for an] outside machinist?" At those days was about dollar and a half [\$1.50].

WN: Where? You mean navy yard?

MN: Yeah, outside.

WN: Oh, outside.

MN: Navy yard was more than that, I think.

WN: And plantation was less?

MN: Plantation, we weren't even getting a dollar an hour.

WN: Oh.

MN: [Including] free house all that. So anyway I worked outside machinist in my time. In my twenties I was getting a dollar an hour. That's journeyman's pay, those days. Dollar an hour. Plantation we were getting about fifty cents an hour. But I came to plantation for housing and everything. I came back to plantation. But anyway, we took the contract. The guy wanted to know how much for one fitting, male or female. "Wait, give me two and I'll tell you how much."

"No, I want to know now."

"You want to know now, take it, I don't want it. I'm gonna do the job, I gotta know how much I gotta charge you."

"Yeah, but I gotta know how much." The contractor said.

"You want to know how much, well, give it to somebody else. I don't want it."

"Yeah, but I gotta have it. Okay, okay, you do it and tell me how much."

Okay, I go by the time take to make the male and the female. Take big holes, you know. The fire department got those big ones on those stands over there. So I make one, well, half an hour, average one hour a nut. One hour, two hours overtime. Two hours, let's see. Five bucks. Two dollars and a half [\$2.50] an hour, that's good pay compared to. . . . We weren't even getting a dollar an hour. Two nuts, five bucks. I work one hour, hour and a half, I make five bucks. Where I work the whole day plantation, those days was ten hours yet, for six dollars (laughs). So I told 'em, "Five bucks a nut."

"Oh, kind of. . . ."

"Give it to somebody else."

He say, "Hey, wait a minute. Jeb told me your name Nobriga."

"That's right."

"You had any outside experience?"

"Yeah, I did lot of work for Von Hamm-Young. I worked Downtown. I did work for everybody. I worked tuna packing, American Sanitary Laundry, the city and county work I used to do for them. I even did work for windmills, the other side of the island.

He shake his head, "Okay, when we have no more of this kind of work, we have something else. Can we bring it here?"

"Go ahead, bring it here."

WN: This was from the navy yard?

MN: No, this was outside contractor.

WN: Still outside contractor? Doing. . . .

MN: Outside contractor do that---they do that for the United States Government.

WN: I see, okay, okay.

MN: He gets that. And then he pull the work out. He gotta see how much we charge, and then he charge.

WN: What contractor was this?

MN: His name was Mullen. That's all I knew him by.

WN: Mullen.

MN: And so we did that for quite a while. After a while they used to bring this shafting for these carts where they load the ammunition and all of that, they wanted the wheels, eh. So we took that. I had lot of spending money. My [plantation] wages, I just give the wife that. "You not going take any money for you this time?"

"No, that's yours."

"Where you have the other money?"

And I used to tell her, sometime left over. So during the war I wasn't worried about. . . . The food was expensive, but I had lot of food from the motor pool. They throw 'em in the yard, all that. I used to save money during the war. I lived in the right place at the right time. And I used to tell my wife, "You know, if it wasn't these guys came and attack Pearl Harbor, maybe we wouldn't be so well-off now." (Laughs)

She said, "We not well-off."

"Oh, we better much well-off than the rest of the people around here."

WN: They paid you cash?

MN: Yeah, the contractor paid me cash.

WN: Did other mechanics in the plantation do that too?

MN: No, the only ones that had that one job was Lino Souza and I. We got all the jobs from him [Mullen]. I think he was the only guy that had trucks with the piping and all that. We did that for quite a while. That money, we used to buy hard liquor or whatever. Beer or what. You stand in line, everything was ration. They got to punch your card.

WN: Where did you go?

MN: Go down Waipahu Depot Road, yeah. The drinking place there. They sell liquor and all that. They allow twelve bottles of beer. Most of the beer used to come in bottles those days. Could buy beer and one quart whiskey per week. Was ration. So I had this card and I go over there and they punch. So I had a card, my dad had a card, my mother had a card, my wife had a card. Some days I used to go there three times a week. So I used to pass some of that to the army guys. When they had a party or big dinner, they drop stuff in my yard, see (chuckles). Corned beef and stuff. And then they give me beer if I wanted. But I never did buy beer. I used to drink hard liquor. This guy Lino Souza, he used to buy his beer. So in the morning, just tell the boss, well, we going down buy some beers.

"You can't leave the shop."

I told Lino. I told him, "Like hell, I can't leave the shop." I told him, "Let's go." We walk out of the shop.

The foreman (chuckles) say, "I'm gonna take your time off."

"Take 'em off. I gotta have my whiskey."

Jimmy, the other guy, "And I gotta buy beer."

We went down, you know. We got kind of independent with the boss. We were stuck [i.e., frozen], we couldn't go anywhere. They couldn't fire us. They wouldn't fire us. So we took advantage. Went down in the morning, line up. All guys to get their booze, eh. Used to go early so we don't stay there too long. Used to stand by sometime almost an hour. Big line before we get there. I think they got there before daylight, lot of people.

WN: What about the other stores, like you know the neighborhood stores like that, they had liquor too?

MN: Well, yeah, most stores had liquor. It wasn't one liquor store, they carry everything. And most merchants were Japanese merchants. Down the hill was just this. . . . Arakawa's wasn't



where it is now. Was where across [the present] Arakawa's, that's where it was.

WN: You mean on Depot---still on [Waipahu] Depot Road?

MN: Arakawa's had a small shop over there. The two boys Takemi and Shigemi were in high school yet. And the old man, I forgot his name. I always forget his name [Zenpan Arakawa, founder of Arakawa's].

WN: Arakawa.

MN: He was kind of go-for-broke guy before. And he had a little hotel above that place there. And I slept there one night in that hotel. Anyway, the story ends right there.

(Laughter)

MN: Anyway, I slept there one night. I was around seventeen years old. My first experience with a woman, you know, them days. Dance hall, I used to go down taxi dance. So the old man told me, "Nobriga, you come bring in your friends come sleep here." So I went. I was around seventeen. But those days, they had Iwilei. You ever heard about Iwilei ["red light" district]?

WN: Mm hmm [yes].

MN: Wide open. So actually young men, their first experience. . . . If you were tall enough and all that you just take your pick. And then women call to you, "Come in, come in. Come on honey, I give you." All that kind of stuff. So my first experience was there. Iwilei. Maybe sixteen, I was tall enough.

A guy took me there, Gouveia, not my neighbor, his brother. "Eh, come on Nobriga."

"You bigger than me. You taller. Go, go, go."

That's it. Then from that time on I respect all women. Those that you pay for, it's okay, that's their job. The rest, I never take advantage. Never did. So when I start raising my family, I really told my kids, my wife told 'em. But the times are different. What was wide open. Kaka'ako was a bad place to go to. But Iwilei was wide open. They were licensed, they were checked every week or every day. They were healthy and all that. And we felt it was safe. And all my life, no problem.

WN: What about during the war in Waipahu? Were there prostitution houses over there?

MN: Yeah, they used to get. We never call 'em. . . . I don't think they were called streetwalkers at that time. But they had, they come around, you know. But most kids---most guys stay away from that. I was one. I stay away from that. Not healthy. You don't know what the hell. But Iwilei was. . . . You figure they were checked by the doctor every week. We felt safe. And I never heard of anybody get the disease. But it was common for all of them. Before you marry and all that you gotta know what the heck's gonna happen. My dad never did preach, talk that kind of stuff to me. But you get it from outside people. Some give you bad advice, you listen to 'em. When you a kid you listen to everything. If it's bad especially. Oh, wide open the ears.

(Laughter)

MN: But the way I was brought up, my sisters and all, chaperone. When I got engaged, I had a chaperone. I never mind. Some people they---that's old-fashioned. They used to know some families allow. I never did like that. I wanted a chaperone. I can control myself, by real discipline, but I would want to go the same way so there wouldn't be any talk after I got married and all that. So when you got married those days, there's a bunch of woman, they put down the date. If the baby is born before time, they all point the finger at you (laughs). After I got married, eh, some people say, "Eh, Nobriga, you all right. Not too soon."

"What do you mean? What do you mean?"

"Oh, you was married eleven months [ago]. So it's okay."

They counting. "How the heck you know eleven months?" I got kind of mad with that. But that's the way it was. They put the dates down.

"Eh, that guy's a gentleman."

(Laughter)

MN: They blame the man all the time.

WN: Was there taxi dancing and things like that during the war in Waipahu?

MN: During the war everything went kind of dead until things got. . . . When the motor pool moved out was towards the end, was ending of the war. See, this guy married my daughter, went down, the war was finished. They went down for clean up and he came back in about couple of months. He came back, stayed with me for a week or two, then he moved to the Mainland. He got two children up there, then he moved back to Hawai'i. Gollnick.

WN: So the motor pool guys were the only military guys in Waipahu?

MN: Yeah, that I know of.

WN: No other military?

MN: Well, I think they had military all over the place [i.e., O'ahu]. But Waipahu was convenient for the trucking. They call 'em motor pool repairs and all that.

WN: What about defense workers from the Mainland? Did they come and live in Waipahu?

MN: No, the defense workers. . . . The only people that came to Waipahu was the motor pool. Nobody else. Of course the ballpark was convenient. They had the house over there, they could stay. And they had water, running water. And they could entertain themselves at that. And they get the place where they could park all the trucks. That's not the only place they took over. They must have taken over all over the island where it was convenient. You know what I mean, eh. And we could get along without baseball and all that. So that's the sacrifice.

WN: So had no baseball during the war?

MN: No sports.

WN: No sports. Okay.

MN: Everybody just stay home and play your radio, whatever you had.

WN: So from '42 to '44 you were with the [Hawai'i] Territorial Guard. And in '44 you joined the O'ahu Volunteer Infantry? What was the difference between the [Hawai'i] Territorial Guard and the O'ahu Volunteer Infantry?

MN: The Volunteer [Infantry] became [part of the] regular [U.S.] Army [because] in case we were having an attack they would take me as a prisoner of war, as a soldier. And in the other one [i.e., as a civilian], they could shoot me right there.

WN: I see.

MN: If you were in the [Volunteer] Infantry you would go in as a prisoner of war, because you're [classified as] a soldier in the service. They said for your safety, for your sake, you get a gun and they look you wasn't soldier, they shoot you right there. But if you belong in the service, bonafide guy, that's it because when they capture a plane, they take all those prisoners. But if you not one, they shoot you. That was the reason they told me.

WN: I see, I see. So then when you were with the [Territorial] Guard, it was like you were a civilian?

MN: Civilian.

WN: So did most people who were in the [Territorial] Guard become Volunteer Infantry?

MN: Well, they asked, lot of them didn't want to get in there. But I went in. The other guys, "Oh the war is almost over." This and that.

I said, "Oh, I'm not taking a chance. I don't want them to come here and kill me over here. If they take me away prisoner, still I can come back someday." Then my son was around eighteen, he got drafted. He went to Germany, was just about the end of the war. Just over there to clean up. He was over there about a year, I think. Then he got discharged, honorable discharge, everything. Private first class, anyway. He got married and he went on his wife's side. He didn't become a Nobriga anymore. You know what I mean? This girl he married, she kept 'em in her family. And in my case, my girls marry somebody, say, "You make a home for yourself. Never mind the Nobriga. I want you to remember this and that, but don't make a Nobriga out of your husband. I don't want that. He's his own man." Of course, they stick to their [Nobriga] side, you know. Women always stick. More aloha. That's the women, that's natural. In my family, my dad's side of the family, we were more my dad's side, Nobriga, Madeira people. My father came first. I always thought my father was always right. My mother was over there, female, Portuguese. You took his name, so you come number two. So one time, my wife, she told me, "You know, I could be the boss here, you know."

I said, "I'm sorry. I would like you to be the boss, but I tell you why you could never be the boss."

"Oh, well I'm not trying to be the boss, but I'd like to know that."

"Okay, you was a Perreira. When you became my wife, what was your name, what you became, Mrs. Perreira? No, Nobriga. So you took my name, because I'm number one. You number two. Okay, satisfied?"

"Oh, I don't know." (Laughs)

Lot of people, Portuguese, ask me. My wife used to say that. Tell her name first. My friends say, "Eh, Nobriga, how come? How come? What makes you think that way?"

"She told you the story, eh. She took my name because she wanted to be a Nobriga. Not Perreira anymore. So I'm number one. (laughs)"

But there's no number one in the family. In fact, in my house number one was my wife. With the kids and all goes to her. If she couldn't handle it, "I'm gonna tell your father today. And he'll take care you." Sometime I used to hear that in the other room. And then I come out, "Eh, what's this I heard? Something mentioning my name or something? I'm a father. You mean this father?" She just (laughs). You know what I mean. And the kids they listen more, you know. I never bother with the kids, I let her handle it unless she stuck.

WN: During the war, what about your parents? They were still. . . .

MN: My parents . . .

WN: They were never naturalized, eh?

MN: They never were naturalized. During the war, my dad and my mother, good thing I stayed back. None of my brothers were here anyway. My sisters were worried about their husbands and all that. My sisters had good schooling and they married guys that couldn't read and write, you know. And they were kind of boss, the place.

WN: You mean, your sisters?

MN: Yeah, they were kind of boss the house. So they couldn't go out and take care my father and my mother. So I took care of all that. Gas masks, everything. Get ration stuff and all that. I used to take care of my dad and my mother. Then every year you had to register in the post office, alien. I used to take care that registration. Every year you go down there and register. I took care of my dad's money in the bank. He couldn't write. He couldn't go and cash it unless he go with me and make a cross. I fixed that up. Told the bank I'd like to collect the money for him when he wants. And I make a cross and sign my name. They accepted that. So after that I used to take care of my dad's money, bank money and all that.

WN: How did they feel about the war? Were they pro-American or what?

MN: My dad and my mother they never talk much about the war. They were old and they were

very quiet people. My mother was a big talker, but my dad, you had to be close to him to hear him talk. Soft-spoken. None of us came like him.

(Laughter)

MN: None of us. He couldn't hear. The only thing I inherited from my father was my ear. I didn't like that. He was---hearing problem. You had to talk to him loud, eh. And my mother used to scold him. He got so he could read her lips I think. And then when she got through he kind of smiled, eh. I used to tell him, "You heard what she said?"

"I heard what she said. She think I'm not hearing, but I can see. I can tell when she talks. She makes motions. I know what she said."

"It doesn't bother you?"

"No, no. That's entertainment." He used to tell me (chuckles).

My dad never fight my mother in his life. He was soft-spoken. For Portuguese, unusual (laughs). You know, it seems the people who talk the loudest are the guilty ones. Other ones are not at fault.

WN: So did he say anything about the war, what he thought?

MN: No, my dad and my mother they were frightened, you know, old people. And I used to go and visit them every day. Take care them and. . . . My dad he start drinking little more than usual during the war, eh. I used to buy him a bottle now and then. And my dad retired when he was eighty-four years old. He worked till he was eighty-four years old in the plantation because he couldn't get social security [benefits] because he was working for the agriculture. Agriculture, when they first got the social security wasn't covered. So he had to come and transfer from the agriculture department to the mill, mechanical. To make a quota so he could get social security. The company gave him a house and everything after forty-two years service, twenty-six dollars a month. For him and my mother to live. That's all they used to get from the company. So when he first went into the mill department he put in to cover the quotas. He got the quotas in and he retired. So he got on social security. He got sixty-two dollars and something from social security. And the company used to give 'em twenty-six dollars. All those forty-some-odd years he put in the company they give 'em twenty-six dollars a month. Social Security, sixty-two dollars. See the difference? That's why I had that picture on the wall (laughs). President Roosevelt. I went out and got a picture some place, frame 'em and put 'em on the wall. Then my dad, the house, everything was free. Everything was free. He only pay lights. So my dad say, "Oh, I can put money away."

I say, "No, you're gonna blow this money. You not putting money away."

So my mother used to buy stuff for the daughters. They [parents] could live on forty dollars a month.

WN: Did the plantation change a lot because of the war? Did they---were they growing less cane or more cane or . . .



MN: The plantation, after the war, the plantation change all together. They mechanize the plantation. Then we got the unions changed a lot.

WN: Okay, what I want to do is talk about the union next time. And we'll get into the union and the postwar part.

MN: But the plantation after the war changed a lot. But actually never change until really more . . .

WN: More later, yeah?

MN: Changed a hell of a lot when the unions came in.

WN: Okay, so what we'll do is we'll talk about the union time, next time, okay?

MN: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 22-58-4-93 and 22-59-4-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Manuel Nobriga (MN)

March 25, 1993

Waipahu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Manuel Nobriga on March 25, 1993, at his home in Waipahu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, why don't we begin. Okay, let's start. So the war was going on and the war ended in '45. Was there anything different right after, as the war ended?

MN: After the war ended, everything got calm. Well, people were happy, relaxed and all that. There's no war, no ration or anything. Anything was open. And no friction. And then sports came back again. Everything. The plantation came back and start all the entertainment. Sports in the ballpark. But the band and a few things we had before that. The band broke up because mostly Filipinos. During the war lot of them move here and there. We had a plantation band. Filipino band. But sports gradually came in and that's when everybody became normal again. Life start going again. Actually during the war we didn't have any hardship. Only was the blackout, they were real strict for our own sakes. Outside of that everybody had job. There was no crime or anything.

WN: Did people start moving out after the war ended?

MN: After the war ended was when people start moving out. We had lost lot of mechanics. Guys went to Pearl Harbor [Naval Shipyard], the guys that weren't frozen. They didn't come back, but we start getting new boys in. Especially in the shop, they didn't allow Japanese boys there, but I got Sadao Shinno there and a few other ones. They became the top men, because I was promoted to engineer. So he [Shinno] came in and he did all the work for me. He was good. He came from trade school and all. He was a cyclist, one of the good riders for Waipahu Pedal Pushers. So in sports and all, all these guys that wanted something, I always help 'em. But he came from trade school, he made number one machinist in the shop. But everything went normal again.

WN: Did the motor pool guys just leave when the war ended? Or did they leave before that?

MN: The war was still on---they ended just about that time. They went down under, a few of them went down under mopping up, or something. And one of the guys that went down under fell in love with one of my daughters. Leo Gollnick. So he wanted to get married before he go down under. Everything was quiet. There were guys being discharged and everything. So the

motor pool [men] went---had to go down under. Before he went down under he got married. We still had blackout, not real blackout, but not like it was [during the early part of the war]. You could have lights in the house and all, but put your shades down during the night. Of course, they didn't know what would happen again. The streetlights weren't on yet. He got married and went down under, and two or three months he came back. All of them came back.

So he came back and he went to Portland, Oregon. He took his wife there, took my daughter with him. So he went to Portland, Oregon, he was a mechanic. One of their children, the oldest one, Lucille, was born in Portland, Oregon. By that time, as years went by I went to visit them up in Portland, Oregon. But somehow I didn't like it there. Maybe it was my daughter, they decided to come to Hawai'i.

So he came to Hawai'i. He didn't have any problems getting a job down navy yard. So he got an electrician job there, he got promoted to foreman. And he raised [three] kids over here in Waipahu. He bought a home up here in Waipahu, up on the hill. Then he got retired. After he got retired, stayed around a while, then he sold his home and he bought a place in Mililani. He got a good price for his old home over here. He bought a place in Mililani and she got sick. She died from [lung] cancer. After she got [diagnosed], she lived at least fifteen years, no problem. Then she start smoking [again]. She used to be a heavy smoker. Start smoking again a little at a time. Then she said, "What's the use. The thing won't go away, eh." But came worse. In fact, that's my second oldest daughter. She was number three in the family. She died. Josephine was sixty years old when she died. When she died, few months after, one of my brothers-in-law died, then my mother-in-law died. All in the family. For fifty years we never had any deaths in the family. Then I lost my wife [Lucy Perreira Nobriga], she died [in 1987]. Then Leo died. In fact, her [MN's daughter's] husband died before my wife. I think in four months I lost my daughter, Leo, her husband, and my wife died. We were planning to celebrate sixty-five years [of marriage]. But two months before that she passed away. She had a guest list and everything. Didn't happen. So I used to think, well, we were lucky. For fifty years we didn't have one death in the family. And I had a flock of twenty-two grandchildren. Not one died till my daughter died. Three in a row. And since then I lost an in-law, mother-in-law, all that. Well, my wife's family wasn't so much. It didn't affect me, my wife's family. I lost brothers-in-law and all. A big bunch of them. And the last guy that came from Madeira with us, but he actually was born in Brazil, he died---he was sixty-five years old. That's the only friend where I had from Madeira. He died two years ago.

WN: During the war, what became of your involvement with the Territorial Guard?

MN: After the war, they disband the whole thing. They give you certificates and all that and that's it. We didn't have---nobody was issued a gun. Nobody ever took up a gun, I think, outside of the officers. And I used to take care the revolver .45. Outside of that you couldn't carry it home. The officers could take it home. Then we have drill every week, every week we had drilling. Sometimes twice a week. Marching, you know, right face, left face, forward march. That kind of stuff. A lot of Filipinos they. . . . They had one Filipino had experience from the army, but he had one accent, eh, Filipino accent like most of them. So he used to say, "Rice face!" Rice. Left was, "Lipt about face!" But I work with Filipinos so long I know what they say. They had the pronunciation of an f and an s is different. Left, "lept." The f and the s. "To the rear march" they were all right. Four, they said "p." "Por you. Por me."

Five, "pive." The f is a p. The p is a f. That's their pronunciation. I have yardboy come here once a month, he still talks to me like I talk to him that kind of language too. "No porget, eh. No porget make good job. Number one."

"You work with a Filipino before?"

"Oh, yeah. I was their boss (chuckles)."

WN: So it was mostly Filipinos---mostly Filipinos in the [Hawai'i Territorial] Guard?

MN: The [Hawai'i Territorial] Guard was strictly Filipinos and a few whatever other nationalities. But Japanese they didn't come in.

WN: Did they have Hawaiians in there?

MN: They had some Hawaiians. Actually they had a few Hawaiians in Waipahu. They had one. He was too old. He didn't join the army. We had a few Chinese-Hawaiians. But all they did was drill.

WN: You didn't have any incidents?

MN: What's that?

WN: You didn't have any. . . .

MN: No, no, didn't have any fights or anything. I was surprised. They get angry at one another, they changed regiment, you know. I changed regiment. I was with a Portuguese---all those that weren't Filipinos. When the guy come over there give the orders, "March, left face, right face." You couldn't hear 'em. All those guys talking together (chuckles). I couldn't hear 'em. That was hearing aid, eh. I didn't have any. I had hard time, you know. So, one day I got mad with one of the guys, Pestana. He was my good friend. I told him, "Eddie, you talk too goddamn much. I quit."

"You can't quit. You sworn in."

"Only the hand. I never sign anything."

(Laughter)

WN: Nobody got paid?

MN: Nobody got paid. You wore the uniform, you buy your own.

WN: You buy your own?

MN: Nobody was issued a gun. Just drill and then they tell you what could happen and this and that. I was sworn in as a regular, few of us, so in case there was an attack I could be taken as a prisoner of war. That's why I had that certificates. They asked me, "Nobriga, if you want to stay in, I'd like you to. You're in this way."

My wife didn't want. [But] I said, "Look, if anybody come and shoot me right in the backyard, here."

So she said, "Okay, okay, okay."

WN: So in 1944, you switched from being in Company B Waipahu Battalion Territorial Home Guard to Technical Sergeant of the O'ahu Volunteer Infantry? For that reason so that you'd be part of the military?

MN: Yeah. That's why I became military. Actually, we were just [Territorial] Guard. But military you had to be sworn in with military people.

WN: But you still didn't get paid for that? You still didn't get any pay for that?

MN: No, I never did get any pay. I had some kind of award, certificate. I lost that. I actually didn't do anything there to worth [i.e., earn] that. I wasn't worth that. I was just over there to kill time and have fun. And then, I was in charge of the guns and I learned how to dismantle a gun. Take 'em all apart, put 'em all together again. I was a machinist then. I like. I had something to do. Had no TV, you couldn't play this, you couldn't play that in the night. Talk story year round. You can't tell your wife stories over and over again. She say, "Oh, I heard that before."

(Laughter)

MN: You know. Say something, "Eh, you told me that three times this week."

(Laughter)

WN: Were you happy that the war ended?

MN: During the war I never was sad. I was always with the cadre. I would go on the side. We had the motor pool over there. And all the trucks that were coming in, I got acquainted with all the officers there, the men, eh. So in the evenings, once in a while I used to go there for half an hour or so and come home. 'Cause I had the guns in there and different equipment from the home guard. The guns were there, ammunition and all. But nobody used. But they had lockers. At the beginning, one guy, Captain Homer, he saw me going over there, "What the hell is that civilian doing over there? Eh you! Who gave you permission?"

I said, from the company, this and that.

"Oh, okay. I'm sorry." And he became my good friend.

WN: Did you have to go around to make sure that people had their lights out and things like that? Was that like a block warden?

MN: When the war really broke out they had block warden.

WN: That was their job, not your job?

MN: I never did go. I told the boss, "No, I can't go." I may be going around block warden and



then there's a breakdown in the mill, they want to call me all over the place.

"No, no, no, you don't go. You don't go."

They say everybody has to go. And I told L'Orange, "If I going be a block warden, okay. But if they call me breakdown in the mill, I'm not going. I'm on duty."

He said, "No, no, no, you're excused." 'Cause during the war we got frozen. The labor got frozen. Especially the mechanics. So I never did go for block warden. But when the war ended, that night, everything went blackout, I went to the Japanese Camp just to tell the people there, my gang from the mill, people I knew, "You guys cool head."

WN: When the war started you mean?

MN: When the war started. The attack, the day of the attack. But outside of that, we never had complaints, we never had. . . . The only thing I missed were the people, the Japanese people. They were so quiet. They were like somebody died. I felt that way too lot of times. They were really embarrassed or I don't know. I know I felt bad about that. Because it's no fault of ours what the heck the other people do. That's why, on TV [i.e., a recent television documentary] one day, about Hiroshima. This top guy from Japan came on TV, he said, "If there was no Pearl Harbor, there wouldn't be a Hiroshima." That's what he said right on TV. That's the end of it. You start something, you didn't finish. Somebody else finish it. But, if there was no Pearl Harbor, there wouldn't be Hiroshima. They complain so much about Hiroshima this and that. If there wasn't Hiroshima, there wouldn't be no Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was there first. So in other words, they were blaming one another, but they blame the guy that started it. That's the way I felt. The Japanese people didn't start that. It's the big guys that wanted something. And all wars, that's the way it starts. The [common] people don't want wars, nobody. After all, who fights the war? Who gets killed? It's the people. Not the big guys, they stay at home kill everybody. So I used to argue this and that. When the guys came on TV say that, I say, "From now on anybody tell me something, that's it." No more arguments. War is war.

WN: The Japanese that you knew on the plantation, did you feel that they were different from the Japanese in Japan at that time?

MN: The Japanese on the plantation were very much against Japan. The whole Japan. They used to say, "You know Nobriga, all them goddamn bastards over there. It's not the working people."

I used to tell 'em, "I agree with you. It's the big guns that want to get more and more. They want more stars or something. I understand that."

They were very much against Japan, the guys, every one I knew. I had one guy, Furukawa, he used to take care the. . . . He had three, four sons. I think two of them went to the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team] volunteer. Anyway, he was supposed to be picked up, go to the concentration camp, eh. And he used to worry, "You know Nobriga. . . ." I used to do all his pipe work. On the big flanges, threading and all that. He didn't know how to explain that very good to some people. But with me I knew what the heck he wanted, so they always say, "Wait till Nobriga through with that machine, take care you." Then I used to take care Joe. I

used to call Joe Furukawa. And he really complain all the time about Japan. Worried because he was happy what he was doing. He had a good job. He was pipe fitter in the mill. Foreman like, you know. I was a machinist. I was making way much money than him. He was foreman, but small pay, you know. But machinist---the only people that were having real good journeyman's pay, was machinist. The rest were all underpaid. Mechanics and all, all underpaid. But machinists, somehow, we had journeyman's pay equal to outside [the plantation]. Those days journeyman's pay was dollar an hour, we weren't getting dollar an hour, but with house and everything, was over dollar an hour. That's why I came to the plantation.

WN: So the people that left the plantation to go defense work, they lost their housing?

MN: They lost their houses.

WN: They had to go find housing on their own?

MN: They buy a house. Some bought a house in 'Aiea, and some of them [who] weren't married, from the family, they could come home [i.e., live in their parents' home on the plantation]. They used to allow that. But if there was a family, they couldn't give 'em a home. So some of them stay with in-laws and stuff like that. They manage. But they never did try to push 'em. I had lot of my family went to navy yard, welders. And lot of boys from Waipahu used to be in the mill. . . . They all wanted to be welders. You can become a welder in two or three days. If you can melt that stuff. If you can control that rod, that's it. Anyway, I took up welding one time. I wanted to learn. So the boss say, "You have to buy a mask. Your own mask. You can't use the other guy's mask."

"Okay, after work."

I saw this other guy Pestana, he used to be welding foreman. He was foreman already. So in one week I could melt and use the rod as good as any of them there. Just melt, you know. Yeah, I had a good hand.

"What the hell, quit, go navy yard. Big pay."

"Hell, I'm a machinist. I don't want to be a welder."

"Yeah, but why, you learn and all that. You could be." The foreman said, "You could be. Some of these guys here can't weld as good as you, you know." Arc welding, you know.

WN: What kind of welding?

MN: Arc welding, Arc. With the rod, they call it arc welding.

WN: Arc welding.

MN: Everything is melted with the rod. Not gas and that stuff, the [blow]torch. But arc welding, get a rod and you melt it. Weld things together. Anyway, I never did like welding. I never did like fire. My eyes were bad. Tell you something about my eye. I was born like that. Couldn't read with my left eye. I don't read with my left eye, yet. And when I got cataract,

the doctor say, "You have a bum eye. You can't see from that eye?"

"No."

"How do you manage all your life, machines and all?"

"The right eye is okay."

So I had cataract both eyes. Told me, "Well, I'm going to operate your right eye. Somebody got to take care you, 'cause you can't see out of that eye."

I told him, "No, fix my left eye." So he did. And you know something, I can watch TV, I can see your clothes. If you not a good-looking man, I could tell you. But you good-looking man, even with this eye. You know what I mean?

(Laughter)

WN: Thanks, eh.

MN: So, anyway, then they fix that eye. I was happy. I can read the watch like this, see. Before I couldn't do it, I was born like that. Then after that, okay, then I went this side. I still can see TV, you know. Everything came all right. This side I could never read without glasses. [Now] I can read without glasses this eye. He made a good job.

WN: You were telling me that during the war you took some contracts. Defense contracts?

MN: During the war the labor was frozen. So during the war, a contractor, this contractor's son-in-law, Jack Vorfeld, was his son-in-law. I forgot the contractor's name. He said, "You know, I have lot of jobs. I could give you. After the plantation, work for me." He had this, fire department hose fittings. The fire hydrants and all, the nut, male and female nut. He had a lot of those casted to be machined and threaded. Around five, six inches, for big nuts. So Jack told me if I would like to do it. I said, "We have to see the company if they let me do it after work." Then he brought one. Jack told me, "Big one. How much you gonna charge for it?"

I said, "Well, let me machine one first, and let you know. I can't---I don't know. I never did one like this. I made small ones like that, but [not] big ones. And rough, you have to bore and then thread it. And it has to be right so it can fit any holes any place." So I made one. And I told him, "The first one took a little long. Maybe two dollars a piece."

He said, "You can charge a little more."

"Make it two and a half a piece then. Whatever." I said, "I won't make it less than two dollars [\$2.00] or two-and-half dollars [\$2.50] a piece. Depends the size."

So when he saw his father-in-law, he brought up a half a dozen of those. Then I got another machinist gang up with me. After work, the manager, L'Orange said, "Well, those boys, they all frozen now, after work, they can do as long as they want. Not more than two hours after work, 'cause we want 'em for the plantation."

WN: So lot of you folks did that?

MN: No, only two of us. They didn't want to give all. . . . Only two of us. They had two machines there that, after work, the machine was clear. During the day the machinists take over, see. I used to work on big machine. So, we got the job. After work we make big money. Couple of hours.

WN: How much did you make? Did you make more than what you made at the plantation?

MN: He said, "Any amount, two dollars and a half and up." Two, I make five bucks.

WN: How much were you making on the plantation?

MN: In one hour [after work] we used to make five, six dollars. Plantation we were getting sixty-five cents an hour, at that time, house, everything. Equivalent to one dollar, in town, those days. So, we said, "Bring some more." So (chuckles) we made more money in three days than the whole week. Then we got kind of rich and we used to go buy. . . . Everything was ration so we used to go buy liquor and all that. But that didn't last forever, you know (laughs).

WN: When did that end?

MN: That ended, month and a half, they had enough nuts and all that. Then they brought in something else. Spindles. For carts, you know, when they load ammunition, big carts, spindles, male and female. I didn't like that, all heavy steel. Thread 'em. You thread the shafting and you could put a wheel on there. We had to bring the pins, the shafting. I didn't like that, so. Then couple of months after that, the guy, the contractor, he got into something else, eh. That's it. They were having all those, get those fire hydrants along the beaches, you know. They dig a well, put the fire hydrants there. They get the water from the ocean, in case of attack. That's the story he told me. And they had motor way outside, not close to the beach. Get the water free, eh. Bring the ocean [water] from there. You could water all over the beaches down 'Ewa way, whatever it was. But it never happened. After they attack, they never come back. They had one incident, down here, down West Loch, down Honouliuli some place. They had a explosion there, but it wasn't Japanese. Some ammunition boat or something exploded. They rushed half a dozen guys to hospital over here. I don't know if any of them died. They took some patients that were good enough, put 'em in the back with those guys there. Don't want incident to happen. Beyond that, we never had any problem. Was peaceful in Waipahu. People used to fight less, people didn't have a chance to fight, [because of] blackout.

WN: Now, before the war ended you got involved in the union [i.e., International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union]? When did you first hear about the union?

MN: Well, before the war, in fact during the war we started the union. I started with Major Okada and this other guy Alphonso. And the guy Reinhardt. But Reinhardt he gave up.

WN: Alphonso who?

MN: Alphonso Guerrero, he was from Spain. He used to work in Gibraltar for the English. Rock

of Gibraltar. Used to work for them, and he could speak little English. Then he married a girl that I used to go to school with. We were good friends. He got married to the girl. He married, had children all that, raise a family. Then anyway, this Alphonso, Major Okada said, "We go form the union." We got together at the ball ground. Major used to take care baseball teams against my team. We were close.

So I said, "Sure, I'd like to learn about the union." I wanted to learn something about the union because my brother was a secretary-treasurer in Oakland Bay area, welders and builders.

WN: Your brother?

MN: My kid brother. He was secretary-treasurer and we used to correspond and he used to tell me about unions, see. And funny, I kind of liked this kind of thing. You know, [he said], "I used to work there for cheap wages and all. Get involved in the union." This and that. They organizing here, they organizing there, this and that. Harry Bridges and all, he knew them. And he was with the top guys. So that's how I got in, Major was talking about it, I said, "We go. We go to school." So I went to labor school. We had about five or six weeks [training].

WN: Where was it?

MN: Downtown. I forgot what school there. McKinley or some place. At one time, we had it close to University of Hawai'i. These guys from University [of Hawai'i] came in and teach us, I think Reinecke or somebody and his wife.

WN: John Reinecke.

MN: And his wife.

WN: Aiko [Tokumasa Reinecke].

MN: She was Chinese or something.

WN: Japanese.

MN: Japanese. I always thought she was Chinese. Anyway, she was sharp lady. And him, oh, I liked the guy. And he taught us lot of stuff. But all he used to teach us, not to fight. Learn how to fight, but no fight. Let them fight us. Lot of tricks in that. Don't get mad. Let them argue. You want to antagonize them guys, go ahead. But don't get in trouble. You soft and all that, you can get more that way. And I went about five sessions, different guys. Harry Bridges came down one time, gave a little talk.

WN: Now, this is still during the war, right? The war hadn't ended yet . . .

MN: During the war, during the war.

WN: . . . when you were doing this, was it allowed to go to this kind of labor school?

MN: Yeah, was allowed.



WN: Was anybody trying to stop you at all?

MN: No. Was free.

WN: Still had martial law, right?

MN: They had martial law. You couldn't go out in the night. During the day anybody could do what they want, as long as you don't get into trouble. But little by little. . . . Anyway, then we had a meeting one day. I had a pass to go out [during] blackout. Jack Hall down there gave me a pass. And all the guys who went to labor school had a pass. Because they used to have meetings in the night Downtown. I just went to one or two, that's all. Anyway, during the war, the union decided we organize to send somebody to the Mainland to the sugar refinery there.

WN: Oh, Crockett [Sugar Refinery in California].

MN: Crockett. So we had a vote. They asked me to go. "No, I don't want to go."

WN: How come?

MN: I wanted to stay with my family. Was still blackout, eh. And they going travel blackout, too. Boat and all. No airplane, boat, you know. I don't like, I get seasick. So I told 'em, "No."

"Well, you sign up already. All right we vote." So we had a vote in the shop. I walked out of there. They came after me, "You elected, elected."

"I'm not going."

"What kind union man?"

"My family come first. I am not going. There's plenty you guys here got no wife, no nothing. You go. What I'm gonna do over there, learn? I don't want to learn. I got to take care my kids. Who was the second highest [vote-getter]?"

"Oh, Alphonso Guerrero got second highest."

"Let him go."

"Oh he has a family, too."

"Wait, wait, I'll talk to him."

So I *wen* tell him, "Eh, Alphonso, I'm not going, you know."

"Really?"

"No, I'm not going."

"Who going?"

"You."

"Oh, I don't know if Lola going let me go."

"Talk to her. That's good chance for you." So he went. He went to the refinery and he came back. I think it was four, five days. Was a week altogether, the boat [ride] and all. He came back and he tried to explain the thing to the boss. How they treat the labor over there, the sugar industry, refinery, this and that. But he couldn't get it across, you know. L'Orange said, "What the heck is he talking about? Nobriga, tell me." His [Guerrero's] English was, Spanish immigrant, I had to explain to the boss (chuckles).

WN: Which boss is this?

MN: Was L'Orange.

WN: Yeah. How did L'Orange feel about all this union organizing?

MN: L'Orange was already manager. L'Orange was a good, good, good man.

WN: But how did he feel about you folks doing organizing union?

MN: Oh, he was for labor, you know. He was on our side. He always used to say, "Don't bite the hand that's feeding you. Don't bite the hand that's feeding you."

I said, "I know. We not trying to break up the company. We trying to get our fair share. We not being treated to our right. That's not your fault, Mr. L'Orange." But the guys who owned the place. . . . At home I treat all my kids alike. But the company not doing that to us. Stuff like that. In labor school we learned how to tell the boss off, too, in a nice way.

(Laughter)

MN: I learned plenty from labor school. You learn lot of respect for the other person. We had lot of respect for the bosses, too, but we wanted in return, too. We wanted to be known that we were human, too. Stuff like that. I knew all the stuff. A lot of stuff I knew from my dad. Do unto others. He's religious. Do unto others as you want them to do unto you. You know, that's religion. But anyway, this Alphonso, he got the message through. I explained to the boss. They used to have a cafeteria there [Crockett Sugar Refinery], see. And they used to let the guys go out, have coffee and all that. All on the Crockett [grounds], where the refineries. And he wanted us to get one here, too. Alphonso, he say, "They have a ca-fe-te-RI-a over there. Ca-fe-te-RI-a."

The boss say, "Tell me something. What the hell is a ca-fe-te-RI-a."

I say, "Alphonso means cafeteria."

Alphonso say, "You no understand. Manuel understands (laughs)."

This Spaniard, he never did become an American citizen. He didn't believe in that. He was a Spaniard, he going to die a Spaniard. I like the guy though, that's his choice.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, so besides you, Alphonso Guerrero, Major Okada, who else was involved in this core group?

MN: We had---[Henry] Reinhardt was in there.

WN: Reinhardt?

MN: [Tadashi "Castner"] Ogawa. Newton Miyagi was there. All these guys were involved. That's the guys finally came to sign the contract. They picked us.

WN: Reinhardt was a worker? Where was he from?

MN: Reinhardt was a machinist. And Miyagi was a welder. And Ogawa was---he was a pan man up at the boiling house. He was working at the boiling house. Sugar.

WN: So these are all the industrial-side workers, right? 'Cause agriculture wasn't involved yet?

MN: Agriculture was.

WN: The pickers, I mean, the cutters . . .

MN: Social security didn't cover agriculture workers at that time, when they first came out with social security. So they were out. If you were working for the pumping department, you were a machinist in the pumping department. The pump is there because they want the water for the cane. So you're [considered an] agricultural [worker]. But if you were [working] in the mill, something going through the mill, cane came in from agriculture, but you turn it to some different product, turn 'em to sugar. So, you covered [as an industrial worker]. That's social security. Or you mechanic or anything. Anything that's pertaining to agriculture, at the beginning, was like that. That went on for couple of years. I don't know how long. Anyway. . . .

WN: At the beginning the actual union bargaining was first only the industrial mill workers or shop workers?

MN: The bargaining was for everybody. The bargaining was for the whole membership. The whole sugar workers, everybody. Only social security was separate. We had nothing control over social security. That's Congress, the guys passed that. [President] Franklin D. Roosevelt passed, okayed it. He started it and Congress okayed it. But I don't know, took couple of years, Congress change it to [cover] everybody. They all Americans.

WN: Yeah. I think it was the Little Wagner Act, yeah? [WN is referring to the law permitting unions to organize agricultural workers, passed by the territorial legislature in 1944. MN is talking about social security coverage for mill and field workers.]

MN: Yeah. But anyway, my dad had to come over from agriculture department, to the mill, to make a quota, so when he retired he could get social security. And we did that and he retired with social security. [Prior to that], my dad was getting something like twenty-six dollars a month from the company when he retired. They knew that it wasn't enough even for groceries. You could almost live on twenty-six dollars a month, two people, with groceries those days, you know. But wasn't enough. So they told me, "You know, Nobriga, if you tell your dad to move from the pump department to the mill warehouse, we can fix him up to make the quota and put him on social security." So I did that. And he supposed to stay there and make the quota. The quota had so many months or something. So anyway he stayed there maybe a month or something. One day, they told me, "You just tell your dad, we got it all arranged. We got it covered. We fixed it. He don't have to stay there a whole year." They fixed it. I told my dad, my dad was happy as heck. He got twenty-six dollars from social security by putting in one quota in the factory. And after forty-two years on the plantation he got twenty-six dollars, big difference. But the company is different. They still gave you a house, electricity, everything, at his time. So, he retired enough money to. . . . I used to buy his tobacco. He didn't want me to. I used to buy a bottle of hard liquor for him once a month. I visit him, two, three times a week. My kids visit them every day. One or two kids. My kids start learning speak Portuguese with my dad and my mother. They knew some Portuguese, the bad words. "You go over and see Grandma, teach you what that word means. Don't ever say that again."

(Laughter)

MN: You know, Portuguese say, if you say that, Jesus can hear you. We were brought up like that, Christian. And every time you say something, you don't worry about your folks, you don't want to hurt Jesus. Kids. That's why lot of Portuguese became fanatics. Real Jesus. For a time, when I was a kid, I used to think that way. When I grew up went to catechism, oh this and that, this and that. I believe---I'm a Christian, but I'm not 100 percent Catholic. Nobody is. The priest is not a 100 percent.

WN: Okay, you went to labor school, Alphonso Guerrero went to the meeting at Crockett, California, you folks are getting started, and the war is still going on though, right?

MN: Well, to get started, I forgot to tell you, we had a meeting first. Sign everybody up. I don't think I told you that.

WN: No.

MN: We had a meeting in the plantation hall, clubhouse. We asked for the hall, L'Orange. He had no choice. We had a meeting to pick different guys. The union was there already, but they wanted to pick up people who gonna sign and to go to negotiations. Get together to get the feel of what they wanted. So, when I went there, one of these guys said, "Nobriga, what are you doing here?"

"What I'm doing here?" I was by the door and he came from the office, management.

"Yeah, what are you doing at this door? You're a machinist."

"Yeah, I'm a machinist."

"You got good pay." This and that.

"I'm not a supervisor. I'm not part of management. I'm a working machinist. I'm not a boss. When I become part of the management, different. You can't talk to me like that. Forget it."

"Yeah, but I'm gonna advise you."

"Thanks but no thanks." I didn't like the way he approached me. Thanks, but no thanks, he tried to scare me. "You just go back and tell your boss, I don't need no advice from you. If I need advice from anybody, I go see L'Orange himself. You tell him." I got mad with him.

WN: Who was this now?

MN: Leno. One guy by the name Leno.

WN: Workingman?

MN: No, he was a office guy.

WN: Oh, I see.

MN: He told me, "What the heck I was doing there?" I was skilled man but I wasn't part of management. I belong rank and file. He didn't want that. I was probably getting more pay than him. He was a pencil pusher. I had an argument with a payroll guy. One day, I work overtime, I went and get my pay. Almost \$200, I work overtime and all.

WN: This was before the union?

MN: All this thing wasn't a union [yet]. And he told me, "You know something Nobriga, you got a bigger check than me. Got more money than me. I'm right here, I got education, I went this, I went that, and you make more money than me."

"What are you trying to say, that I'm dumb?"

"No, no, no. What I mean is I got a diploma and I went through all this and you make more money than me."

I told him, "You know what's wrong with you? You were at the wrong job. You want money. Every penny I made is with these two hands and something up here [points finger at head]. I don't have to get a machine to add stuff over here like you. And what the hell you trying to say, you're a better man than me because you get an office job? I get full of oil and all that and get dirty. I'm worth every penny I earn. Give me my check and be done with it."

"Oh, don't get mad."

He give me my check. I used to fight them *Haoles* (laughs). I like 'em, but the guy used to get sassy with me. I tell 'em off. They used to really discriminate. The *Haoles* discriminate everybody, especially workingmen. "You don't belong there. You're a skilled man."



"I don't belong you. I don't belong your guys' society. I may be making more money than a lot of you guys there in the office, but I earned every penny I got. If these hands don't move and I don't move I don't get it. You guys can sit on your *'okole* and still get paid. If I don't move, money don't come in." Well, I *wen* learn that stuff from the union. Tell them guys off when you get a reason to. Sometimes I used to make up reasons. I get mad. (Laughs)

WN: You know, you were in your forties, right, by the time you folks started the union?

MN: Yeah, I was in my forties, forty-five.

WN: And guys like Major [Okada] were real young guys, eh?

MN: Yeah, we were young.

WN: How did you guys get along with the young guys and you guys were the older ones?

MN: We used to get along good. I had lot of respect for Filipinos. One time at [a meeting at] August Ahrens School, they wanted to nominate somebody for something. Was mostly Filipinos. Some guy nominated this guy, that guy, this guy. And that guy say, "I move the nominations be closed."

"Oh, no, no, no, no, no. No *pau* yet. No *pau* yet. One more man. One more man. Nobriga."

I said, "I decline the nomination."

"No, no, no, you cannot. You no can do that. You no can do that."

"All right."

I took it. Then they vote. I clean sweep the whole bunch (laughs). The Filipinos used to like me, see.

WN: This is voting for what?

MN: Voting to represent the union of some goddamn thing. I don't know what it was.

WN: Oh, I see.

MN: For some kind of talk with the boss. Or some kind of committee or something.

WN: Who were some of the Filipino leaders?

MN: Well, the Filipino leaders---most of the [community] leaders were bosses. They never got in the union. The guys had a good job.

WN: What about the union leaders?

MN: Well, we never bothered them. Frank Barcelona he was more like a king, you know. Newton Miyagi's father, he was the Japanese bigwig man. He used to work in the office. He was

leader [of the] Japanese. Newton was his son. He [Newton] was Hawai'i born. But the father was Japan born. And then they had the Filipino, Frank Barcelona. He was a Filipino in charge of all Filipinos. And then they had this guy, Jimmy Monden. He's supposed to take care the Hawaiians. But they didn't have enough Hawaiians [working on the plantation]. And they wanted a Portuguese representative, some Portuguese leader. And they try to pick one, everybody refuse, refuse. They had one lady---they had a gathering of all these different clubs and everything. And the Portuguese came in and the old man L'Orange brought 'em all up. And that day for---when they had that meeting, Filipinos, Japanese, Hawaiians, and all that. So L'Orange came and see me, he said, "Well, we gonna have speakers today, Frank Barcelona gonna speak. And Monden gonna speak. And Miyagi gonna speak. So we want you to speak for the Portuguese."

"Mr. L'Orange, I'd like to do it, but no. I don't like to refuse you, but the answer is no."

"But I want you to."

"But my people didn't pick me, Mr. L'Orange. You picking me. I appreciate that, more than you can ever. . . . I do appreciate that."

"You qualified. You can talk. You know what to say." This and that.

"Mr. L'Orange, I can help you by picking somebody I know, Portuguese. But not me."

"Okay then, okay. Find somebody."

"These Portuguese are way older than me, being over here for long time. And nice people, nice family. I going pick 'em." So I *wen* pick a guy, Joe, Joseph Moniz. I went and ask 'em.

"Eh, Nobriga, no, no, I'm scared." He didn't want to talk.

"Just go over there." And L'Orange was assistant manager at that time. "Go over there, just thank Mr. L'Orange for recognizing you and then, 'Someday I know that you will be our manager. I'm looking forward for you be our manager someday. And my people will always do the best by you.'"

That's all he had to say. And he went there, he had a big hand. And L'Orange liked the guy forever (chuckles). Anyway, he went. After that L'Orange came by me, he said, "You did the right thing."

I said, "That man has been here longer than me. He was born here and all that. I would be disrespect him if I go take over." And besides, nobody elected anybody from the Portuguese. They [Portuguese] all independent people. Everybody wants to be boss (laughs). So I figure of all the cool-head guys, he [Moniz] was. I knew him. Soft-spoken. When he used to get angry, he never raised his voice. I used to wish I was like him sometime. I get angry, I raise my voice. I didn't get it from my dad. My dad he was a soft-spoken man. But my mother (laughs). . . . But she used to talk loud because she had no choice. He [father] was almost deaf. So we got it from my mother. She won't call you, "Come here." She yell at you because she thought she was talking to my dad (laughs).

WN: So, did people from Downtown come? Like Jack Hall? Did he come to talk to you folks?

MN: Well, Jack Hall didn't come over here to help. We got that all straighten out Downtown. For sign and everything was all made Downtown. And I didn't go down there. Major was hustler. He went down there. Major didn't want to sign. I told Major, "How come, you get my name there and you don't want to sign?"

"No, no, no, Nobriga. I get other things to do. I want to stay in the back. Don't worry about me. I want you to go sign."

I said, "You took me to labor school. We went together and all, now you don't want to sign."

WN: This is---sign what?

MN: Sign the contract.

WN: Sign the first sugar contract [between the sugar planters and the ILWU], 1945?

MN: Yeah, yeah. So he picked me. He gave me the list of the other guys. So we went and sign in the manager's office.

WN: So, you know, when the war ended, did things pick up faster to get the first contract out?

MN: That's when we got faster. All this stuff came after the war. The war was still. . . . The war never get altogether clear for long time. Was over, but officially didn't come for long time. So during that time, they weren't fighting, but they were getting things together, everybody.

WN: You folks knew, by then, that the war was going to end soon.

MN: Yeah. And then during the [latter part of the] war the labor became lot of more power and all. Not only in Hawai'i, everywhere. Because they the guys that went out and fight. And they deserved to be recognized. That's how 442nd [Regimental Combat Team] went, too. We do all the fighting and we come home. We even get a job. That's was the whole thing about the sugar workers. To start, were really underpaid. Enough to exist, enough. You happy, you work, you sleep, early to bed, early to rise. In and out, you having a good time. People were more together. If you weren't together you were lost.

WN: So you're saying that one of the reasons the union took off and was able to get the contract and so forth, one of the reasons is because lot of the workers were people who fought in the war and came back?

MN: Oh, I always thought and I think, still think, the reason why is without that war the sugar industry wouldn't be. . . . The union would never exist. The war did lot of things for people. Lot of things. People became civilized and people start buying cars and stuff. Everything went up. Not only in Hawai'i. All over. Especially United States. Soldiers and all came back, get a job and all. After the war, everything went different. Not only here, Japan was the place that grew the fastest in the world. If didn't have a war, Japan would still be way back. Used to

buy anything from Japan, "Made in Japan," they throw it away. Now everything made in Japan. I got a TV, Hitachi. I buy the best. I get 'em what, eight or nine years.

WN: That's probably made in Taiwan, though? (Laughs)

MN: I don't know where. Regardless, but, it's a Japanese name. Oh yeah, somebody else make it for them, but it's theirs. And before we never used to buy, because they didn't want to buy stuff from Japanese. I used to buy shoes from Japan, eh. But they never fit me. They small. Wide, but small.

WN: Plus you said, too, that during the war the federal government was really running Hawai'i. All these controls and as soon as the war ended these controls were lifted.

MN: During the war, everything come under federal law. [Hawai'i] was a territory then. We came the fiftieth state few years after. Quite a few.

WN: [Nineteen] fifty-nine.

MN: And we wanted to be the forty-ninth state at that time. But Alaska got it. Alaska and Hawai'i got in about the same time. I think Alaska got first.

WN: Right.

MN: And then everything went calm. Everything change. If they didn't have a war, everything be the same thing. You take especially TVs and cars and all that. Airplanes. When I went the first flight to Portland, Oregon. I went on those big clippers (chuckles). Hell of a time to get over there. Fly around Portland. All foggy when you fly. Fly around, fly around. I didn't like that at all.

(Laughter)

MN: You went up there too? Your time was already better.

WN: Oh yeah. You know, you were really close to Hans L'Orange, yeah? You know, as part of the plantation, what they call paternalism, they were able to supply the sports activities and the field and the supplies and things. And then now you folks talking about union. How did you feel about that? Did you feel bad? Or you know, how did your relations with L'Orange change? Did it change at all?

MN: Well, after we got the union, L'Orange stopped backing up all the sports. We felt bad. And we felt that the union spoiled it. Lot of people. And I told 'em, "You can't have your pie, and still eat it." Or something like that, I told 'em. "You folks are better off now. You get good wages and all that. You can take care your own play things. You can buy a car and everything now." This and that.

"Oh, not yet. You can't even buy a home."

But when they [union] took over and all, they lost the ball ground. So Major and a few politics, you know, that's when [John A.] Burns came in as [governor, 1962-74]. We push through him and all, eh. They bought the ballpark from the company.

WN: You means Hans L'Orange [Park]?

MN: Yeah, Hans L'Orange Park. That used to be---when we came Hawai'i to Waipahu, that used to be a cane field there. Way back. They had cane field right up to the houses. So they bought the ballpark. They didn't have toilets or anything like that.

WN: Who bought it? The city or the state?

MN: The City and County [of Honolulu] bought it [from O'ahu Sugar Company]. Then they bought that. Then they start putting some facilities there that you can go to the toilet and all that stuff. They start putting all that stuff in. And then they got a janitor take care the whole place. Then they fenced it. That belong to the city and county. Then way in the end there's a marker there with "L'Orange Park" that. . . . When L'Orange was retired for a few years, they dedicated the park.

And I went down the ballpark, where the place is now. They had the chair there, L'Orange came and we all shake hands with him, this and that. We all waited for Eileen Anderson. She didn't show. "Boy," I said.

All the guys over there said, "Eileen Anderson not going be mayor anymore in this town."

And she lost [to Frank Fasi in 1984]. She didn't show. Some representative said, "Well, Eileen Anderson had this and that, this and that." That one time that the people wanted her to come, and, you know, city and county for Hans L'Orange, she didn't. We campaign for every goddamn thing when elections came around. That's it. Then she lost.

I met her, here at this corner. I met her there when she came there campaigning. This Japanese guy from Liliha introduced me to her. And she told me, "You know I'm running for mayor." This and that, this and that.

I said, "I'm sorry. I wish you good luck, but I'm Frank Fasi man. I wish you good luck anyway. I'm sorry. I'm Frank Fasi man." I walked away. I never like her. She turn us down.

Then I told that guy, "Eh, what the hell you take that lady around for? You know what she did to Hans L'Orange?"

"I had no choice." That guy told me. "I can't refuse. *Bumbai* I lose all my friends."

I said, "Who's all your friends? She's not your friend." I got mad with him. He was taking her all around, campaigning. I told her straight. Then she lost. That thing went around, you know, about that dedication.

WN: She only had one term, eh?

MN: One term. Frank Fasi came back and beat her. And that thing was surprise. To me it wasn't. I was glad (laughs).

WN: How did the management of the plantation change after union came in? After the war and the



union? Was there difference? Big difference?

MN: When the plantation---I'm gonna tell you a little story about the plantation. When we got the [union] contract, the assistant manager [of O'ahu Sugar Co.] came down.

WN: Who was this?

MN: What the heck his name now? I always forget his name. He came down to my place. I lived in the ballpark at that time. He came over there, L'Orange send 'em down. I forget his name. Well, anyway, the assistant manager came down and told me, "Nobriga," was in the evening, "want to take a ride with me?"

I told him, I look at him, eh, "Why, why, why, I like take a ride with you? Where you going?"

"I'd like to talk to you about, no offense, about the union." This and that.

I used to be in the scouts. I was assistant scoutmaster. And he was the big leader in the scouts, assistant manager [of O'ahu Sugar Co.]. He [later] went to Lahaina [i.e., Pioneer Mill Co.]. Anyway, so I went with him for a ride. And he told me about, when the boys want to make a strike or shutdown this or that, you know, he was advising me just what to do, see.

We came home, before I got out I told him, "The union not here to break the plantation. We only here to get a better deal. By getting a better deal we're gonna build up the plantation, providing we get our fair share. That's what the union is all about." I told him. "Nothing else. And we're not here to bite the hand that's feeding us."

And he told me, "Okay, Nobriga, I'm glad I saw you."

"There won't be any problem. You treat us nice. You treat the people nice, they going to appreciate that. We not here to break the [plantation]. That's where we get our money, that's where we get our everything for our families and all."

He was satisfied. And he *wen* tell L'Orange. L'Orange came in the shop, "I'm glad Tester talked to you. I told him he didn't have to. But he wanted. And you gave him the right answer."

L'Orange was all for labor, you know. Hundred percent for the labor. He used to love the labor. Ballpark, everything, was all there through him. But, Eileen Anderson I never forgot that. Oh, his name now, I got his name, Tester.

WN: Tester.

MN: Keith Tester.

WN: Keith Tester.

MN: Keith Tester. He went to Lahaina afterwards. He went to Pioneer [Mill Co.].

WN: So after the union [came in], the management didn't do as much. As far as sports and housing and things like that?

MN: The union---we had a beef. After I became supervisor, I had a few run-ins with the guys, you know. Some of the guys turned me in for some reason. There was a time when they turned me in. I had two boys [i.e., workers], I suspended 'em for a week without pay. On a weekend washdown of the mill, they wash a little bit and hand that thing over to these two mechanics. They hand the hose to the other guys and they'd run off, go home. And these guys clean up the mill. I no go supervise everything. After everything is done, then I go down and see what they did. They get hour and a half for that. Overtime. So I went there, oh, pretty clean. But couple of weeks after I went that shift again, I went there again. These two guys who were cleaning were mad. I said, "Eh." I went there a little earlier. "Where's Manchi?"

"Oh, Nobriga. Every time over here, make us sucker. He run away every Saturday, weekend."

So I found that out. I was paying them time and a half for that. That happened three weeks. I got really burned up. I used to like these two boys. They good mechanics, the best. They couldn't work with the other engineers, but they liked to work with me because they were my type, fast. Fix fast. The other engineers say, "Eh, you gonna get accident."

I used to just leave them, "You guys know how to work. That's your speed. You can't slow 'em down, they get hurt."

So they came on my shift. And then when they did that, I suspend 'em for one week. Then L'Orange told me, not L'Orange, my boss, Jack Vorfeld, "You suspend 'em more than one week, two weeks."

I said, "No, Jack, no Jack."

WN: Jack who?

MN: Jack Vorfeld, my boss. He told me, "Don't suspend the guys less than one week."

I told him, "Well, they my good mechanics." He wanted to suspend them more. More than one week. I said, "One week, Jack."

Then when they were home, the second day, their wives passed by the mill, one of them told me, "Hi, Mr. Nobriga."

"Eh, how's Manchi?"

She said, "Good for him. He used to come home early on Saturday and I used to tell him, 'You running away.' And now he get his medicine." I fight him.

I figure (chuckles), this is getting bad. I said, "Okay, okay, okay, you no fight him anymore." I told her. "I'm sorry. I hurt the family."

"No, you no hurt the family. Good for them. They no listen to nobody but you."

So I went and see Jack. I told him, "I want to get those two guys back. The two days is enough for them."

He told me, "No, no, no, one week."

"Jack, I can't lift that thing out. I can't fix it up. I go to the big boss."

"Why?"

Then I told him the story, eh. "Put yourself in my place, what would you do? The wife's a good friend. The wife said they deserve that, but me, I don't want. They don't know that they hurting their family. Two days was enough for them."

"Well, okay. I agree with you. You don't have to go see the boss. You go ahead. You go to the. . . ." Those days they call 'em industrial relations [department]. Now they get, what is that name now, human resources. That's what it is now.

Went over there, fix it all up. I sent a guy over to their house. "Come back work." The guy said, "They never run away again."

(Laughter)

WN: Okay, now this is when you were management, right? So from '46 on, just before the strike, the first strike, you became an engineer or part of management. How did that come about?

MN: I don't know. Before the strike came on---see, what really union was for is to give everybody a break. Not only bring *Haoles* or whatever, their favorite guys come out and get promotion. So L'Orange, we were always kind of friendly. L'Orange came ask me, "How about promotion, Nobriga?"

I said, "For what?"

"I want to bring you [to be] shop foreman, or engineer."

I said, "I've been twenty-five years, after twenty-five years you're the only man recognize that. I take it. Thank you."

But my [immediate] bosses didn't okay that yet. They say, "I'm the boss." He got mad. "I'm the boss. I'll fix that."

I said, "We'll see."

Shop foreman. They all used to give excuse. We can't let him go, we need him for this, we need him for that. I used to run all the big machines. Nobody wanted to work on the big machine. So I got promoted to shop foreman. Then when I got promoted shop foreman, this guy that used to be with me, Vorfeld, he was the chief engineer, he got promoted. He was my helper and all, but he got promoted way ahead of me. He became my boss. Then he came

over there, he said, "Eh, Nobriga, how about you come in the mill? I would like to get you in the mill instead of the [machine] shop. I give you more money than in the shop."

I said, "Johnny Rapoza is on the job now. What we gonna do with Johnny Rapoza?"

"No, he's no good over there. I don't like 'em. How about you swap? You going get thirty, forty dollars more a month than him."

"Okay."

I went [mill] engineer instead of shop foreman. So I went shift engineer. And I stayed shift engineer. In the meantime, the guy that became shop foreman, we exchanged. He died in less than a year. Then they wanted me to go back to the shop. They didn't have anybody to replace him and they wanted me back. And Jack [Vorfeld] told me, "The shop job is open. I don't want to release you, but if you want to go it's up to you. We're not going to cut down your pay, but if you stay here we're gonna raise your pay instead. You got night work, but you shift. Three months of the year you work daytime repair and all that. The rest shift, eight-hour shift."

So I said, "Well, I need the money, what the hell, for the family."

I stayed back. In the meantime when this guy died, I stayed back, they wanted a guy to take care the big work. That was, in fact, before he died. He was only shop foreman couple of months, he died. And they want a guy to take over all the big work. Nobody wanted to do it. So they got a guy, he's related to my son-in-law, Lopes, from navy yard. Do all the big work in [Pearl Harbor] navy yard. He came over there and took over all the big work. They hired him special. But outside of that, everything went normal, people got along okay.

WN: How did you feel? Now you went from labor rank-and-file to management? How did you feel about that?

MN: At the beginning I felt very bad about that. I felt---the job that I was doing I kind of lost patience. How the hell, this is the same thing over and over again. Breakdowns, or something, I got these two mechanics on my shift. These guys that I laid off, they used to fix chain, things like that. They were fast, eh. But after the breakdowns, put out the time, go over there. I got involved with these guys that bring the cane [to the mill] in the night. I used to go on the night shift, a guy by the name, Mako Suzuki. He worked on my shift. He take care the field work in the night. He's the big boss over there. And he runs up and down with the car. And he had the department telephone. He ring down the mill, this and that. So, in the meantime, he lost his wife and he asked me, "How about you take a ride with me on the ten o'clock shift? I lost my wife." This and that. And the ten o'clock was rough for him.

So I had to buckle, "I'll see Jack as long as you keep in touch with the power house. If something happen in the mill you gotta drive me back, regardless where you are."

So he said, "I knew that."

So we talked to Jack. Jack had to go see the manager. The manager said, "If Nobriga wants to do it, and Mako wants to do it, they can control."

He used to like Mako. Mako was number one. So I used to go on the ten o'clock shift. I used to go with Mako.

WN: Okay, wait, I'm gonna turn the. . . I'm gonna switch tapes.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-59-4-93; SIDE ONE

WN: Okay.

MN: I used to go with Mako. And at the beginning, in the car, poor guy start weep, you know. "Eh, stop the car, stop the car. Go ahead, you want to cry, cry. Go ahead." I used to feel sorry for the guy. At that time, I didn't know what when you lose a wife, what it was. Bad, bad, bad! Anyway, after I got to going every ten o'clock shift, I used to go with him two or three times a week. I got so I start beginning to like the job. And the ten o'clock shift was hard. I used to look forward to ten o'clock shift. Used to go out with Mako, we talk story, afterwards he got relaxed. And sometimes he used to come down the mill, "I'm not going out tonight, Mako. You sit over here in the office." And he talk. And he get his supervisor out there, telephone. So him and I got along good. My last four, five years, him and I worked together. I used to like that job, when I was with Mako. All the other supervisors, I used to get lot of problems with them. They couldn't bring the cane, they blame me that the mill going too fast or I going too slow. They piling up the cane, you know. No cooperation. They come down when they used to bring lot of cane and sometime they bring so much cane, the mill only goes the top speed. The guy come down and, "Eh, Nobriga, what's the matter? All the cane, all the trucks line up. You the speed king, you can't drive the cane." They come over here, needle me, you know.

I say, "Eh Meyers, one of these days, you're gonna cry you can't bring me the cane."

"Oh, we getting enough cane. We getting enough tonnage. We get 200 tons an hour. What more you want?"

"You go to the lab and see the performance. You don't know what you're talking about."

"What do you know?"

"Go to the lab and see."

And he went and he found out what the hell it was all about (chuckles). Field guys. "You can go to the lab. Your performance is right there every hour. If you putting too much water in the sugar to get all the juice out, it's there. Turbidity. Or the purity. How much trash, how much mud. It's all analyzed in the lab."

So every hour I used to go there, I figure, well, I using too much water. In the mill, they get spray of water going in the bagasse to get all the rest of the juice that's in the bagasse. And if you have too much water, you gotta boil that water in the boiling house to get all that purity



out. And it's marked you know. Every hour, they take mine and say, "Eh, you using too much water." I go over there and cut down on the water. Or, "There's turbidity," or, "Too much mud." "You going too fast." Only allowed so much. So I used to run the place according to the lab. And once in a while these field guys used to come over there, turn me in to the boss. Boss come around, "Eh, Nobriga, going too fast for the guys." Or this and that. They always blame me.

"You go in the lab and look." He go in the lab, that's it. He stop listening to them people. That I was making too much tonnage for the boiling house. They say I'm putting water. "Go in the lab and see the turbidity. Go see how much sugar, how much water. What that guy talking about?" They go in there, they never believe 'em after that.

WN: Let's talk about the strike. Just before the strike you got promoted. How did you handle that? You know, you folks were an instrumental part in getting the union contract in '45. And then now the first strike [1946], you're on the other side of the fence.

MN: When the strike went on, they kept all the supervisors. Go on the shift, too, you know. Take care the mill, some out in the field, ride around see that nobody set fires on the cane. But the labor was smarter than that. They not gonna set fire on the cane, that's their life. So we had a meeting there, and I said, "The union not going to set fire to the cane, that's their life over there. No cane, no more they can come back after the strike."

"Yeah, but they don't think like you, Nobriga."

"Sure they think like me. I was a union man before I became one of you guys [i.e., management]."

They never did like when I used to say that. Jack said, "You better not say too many things like that in front the boss."

"I told L'Orange that. Mr. L'Orange know my style."

"You told L'Orange that? What he said?"

"He said, he agree with me."

"Okay, okay. But anyway, I want to keep you for a little more years here. No bother with it. Just listen and no say anything." But when they used to say against unions, I used to get mad because I signed the contract. I was there.

WN: Let's take a break now, okay. Can we take a short break?

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, you know, you were management during the strike. Were there any problems, real problems with the workers? Picketing and so forth, any problems?

MN: During the strike, all the supervisors came on duty, you know. The shifts went on. On the mill shift, they had two supervisors on duty all the time. In fact three supervisors. Had to go

around the mill, you know, in case somebody set fire or something, but never did happen. Not one incident. Didn't have fences those days. Now the whole place is fenced, but if you want to make trouble, the fence is nothing, you can jump over the fence. But anyway, no problems.

WN: What about problems with scab labor? What about Ilocano? Weren't the Ilocanos coming in at that time?

MN: No, nobody came in. Nobody wanted to be sugar worker. Nobody interfered with the sugar strike. But when the strike started, they got all those bubble-eyes in front of the office, in front of the mill, and they were walking around the street. From Waipahu Street and came by my place. And they had a foreman there, Gouveia. He used to be a *luna* in the field. They pass Gouveia, the Filipinos start yelling, "*Bakalao, bakalao.*" *Bakalao* means codfish in Filipino. "*Bakalao, bakalao.*" I don't know. They didn't like him. The Filipinos, they had no choice. But he was a push, you know. If the guy not doing right, he give 'em a note and he lose his day, at those days. That's before the union. "Oh, you not cutting right, oh, you go home." Stuff like that. That's the way the *lunas* used to push people around. I worked in the field when I was a schoolboy, too. I know.

Anyway, they pass there and they did that for about four, five times, parading from in the morning. They pass this place. And I live the other house over there, passed my place. My wife look out, eh. They pass my place, some. They never bother. And then my wife told me, "Eh, I'm glad those men didn't say anything." They yelled over there, "*Bakalao, bakalao,* Gouveia. All these man, you know all these man."

I said, "Maybe I don't know one of them. I know only the mill men. Maybe they pass by I don't know." But they didn't yell.

So, four, five times they went by like that, then they quit. They stopped going around. Everything went quiet. But everybody go on [strike] duty. The strikers go on duty. They had a bunch [picketing] by the mill, where we go in, they had a gate. Everything was close up. They go in---my men, my number one mechanic, Yoshi, he died already, Yoshi. And a few other guys, some field guys, five of them by the gate. Sit around. We went on the shift like we were going [work]. One week you work two to ten and so on. So first time I went, I went in, I look at him, "Hello, Yosh." He just, that's it. I felt sorry for the guy. I was made part of management only about two or three months before the strike went up. And I used to feel bad in the beginning, goddamn they think I sold out. But I didn't sell out because before I accepted the job, somebody talked to me, they came down, "You take that job. No quit. That's what the union is for that everybody get their break. If you're not going to take it, you going against the union rules." He made me take it, was Major [Okada].

I said, "I realize that. I was taught that in the labor school, but I feel guilty as hell."

"You and I not just another guy. The people think about you and me different. That's the way I feel anyway."

"No, no, no, no, no. We work. Guys like you take over." So I went. But he [Major Okada] never did get a promotion 'cause there never was one over there where he used to work.

WN: Where did he work? In the mill?

MN: He worked on the vacuum pans, where the final sugar is done and they dump 'em down to dry. He had a top job up there. Sugar boiler. They had a sugar boiler, the boss, but the guys that really do the sugar boiling was, he was one of them. When the crystals ready to drop, molasses, they drop 'em down, then it goes down to the centrifugals, dry it, get the molasses out, the brown sugar come out. Major was like that. Major was---I don't know if you ever knew him.

WN: I knew him, I knew him.

MN: Small guy. Sharp. He didn't give a damn how big you was. If he had something to say, he tell you.

WN: In fact, Major was one of the ones that wanted this university project to get started. You know the oral history, interviewing and everything. He was one of the ones that really supported us.

MN: Major, he was a good man for everybody. I understood Major more than anybody else. Guys used to say, "You and Major make a beef and, what, you still friends?" Why not. I know lot of stuff today through Major. He made me go through labor school and all. In fact, I got friendly to Major through his wife. His wife used to have a saimin stand. And she used to sew. My wife used to call her dressmaker. And Major's name wasn't Okada. That Okada was his wife's name, but he had other name before. He was adopted [into a family] that had no [male] children. He married that *wahine*, eh. That's how we became friends from way back.

But Major knew that he didn't want to hurt me and I didn't want to hurt him, but he had his job to do. "Eh, Nobriga, come on, come on I want to talk to you."

"No, no, no, I got no time for you today."

And the union guys used to say, "You talk sassy to the union boss, you no scared?"

"No, no, this not. We not talking about this, this my friend."

"How come you friend with Major?"

"What's the matter, you think this animal?" (Laughs)

This Filipinos couldn't understand that. They think that we enemies after I became boss [i.e., part of management]. I just told them, "Look, suppose no more all workingmen like you fellow. I no can be boss. You fellow make me boss. You fellow give me the job. If no more workingman, how can be boss?"

"Eh, I understand. Yeah, yeah, yeah."

Some of them, they tell you. Without men, who you gonna lead, yourself? Anyway, but Major and I were close because family, family ties. The wife and my kids and they used to go eat saimin there, too. We're neighbors when we were living by this store, Kiso Store.

WN: Okay, so, you know, the war ended, the union got started, they had the strike, you retired in '63, right? What changes have you seen through the years? How has Waipahu changed over

the years?

MN: Waipahu, the living and all, Waipahu is not the same. The difference what I feel is, families were together those days. Even with the union, I lost track of lot of things when I moved from the ballpark. My kids were raised there. We lived there almost twenty years. They built a house, they built two houses there. And my kids were raised in the ballpark.

WN: You moved here in about what, 1950s? To this house?

MN: I've been here [MN's current home] about twenty-six, twenty-seven years.

WN: So in the sixties sometime, eh?

MN: I moved from below here, and then here.

WN: So from the ballpark you moved down . . .

MN: Down here for about two or three years. Then, eventually they was going to sell that place to somebody. This place was open. My wife asked me, "Let's get this house." She admired this house. Everybody admired this house. You know how many houses are made like this in Waipahu? One more. This one and one up in Manager's Drive. Two houses like this. They were gonna build some more, but too expensive. So they stop building. This was built for, at one time, for an assistant manager. I got this house when the assistant manager who lived here went to Wai'anae. Then they had the chemist superintendent. And then they had a guy, he was working the shop, [E. K.] Hardy. He died. Then one of his relatives moved in here. Somehow he was here for five months, he wasn't working the plantation, but he had the house. And they were wondering. So I asked the guy, "Hey, you no work in the plantation?"

He told me, "No."

And I told him, "I'm gonna apply for this house."

"Oh, go ahead apply. Somebody tell me move, I move."

So I went apply for this house. This place here was going be closed down. So I went down here, I got this house. I had lot of trouble to get it painted and all that. But L'Orange gave me this house. In fact, when I ask for this house, L'Orange told me, "Nobriga, you can have the house, but that's a good house, a good place, are you gonna be happy over there?"

I told him, "Yeah. My wife wants the house very badly. In a few years I'll be retired," I figured.

And I came here and he says, "Okay." And he didn't want to paint the house, and he got me to paint the house. We been in here maybe twenty-five, twenty-six years, I think.

WN: Twenty-five, twenty-six.

MN: Close to thirty years. See, I've been retired thirty years [since 1963] and I was here about four years [after retiring]. Maybe twenty-six years I've been here.

WN: You been here---ballpark, you were there for twenty years, yeah?

MN: Beg your pardon?

WN: You were there at the ballpark for about twenty years?

MN: About twenty years.

WN: You were here for about almost thirty years?

MN: And then I was away, Maui, I don't know how long.

WN: Yeah, right, right, okay.

MN: But I been in Hawai'i, when I came from Portugal, all my life.

WN: So as you look back at your life, how has your life been?

MN: I look back on my life, if I had to change, I don't know. You see, I was handicapped all the time with one eye, eh. And I wanted to make it so badly, how I got jobs and became a machinist, I've been wondering about it for years and years. I got away with it. If was today, I could never get a job. Physical. Nothing wrong with my body, it's the eye. A machinist have to get good eye. And then, the most you use when you're a machinist, you use your right eye. You bore something you use your eye, you look in the hole, eh. And if this eye was the bad eye, I couldn't make it. But the good eye was the right place. And anything else, not only boring, towards the chalk, everything, you have to have a good eye. And the chalk is on the left. The left eye don't have to do. You not gonna look like that, you look like that. But that's it, that's how I made it. And nobody knew that I had a bad eye until they came to this safety first in the plantation. Had to use goggles, but I already had. Had to use all that. Then they knew, but I was set. They didn't care if I had one blind eye. I could do the work.

(Laughter)

WN: You know what I've noticed, you know, all the interviewing that we're doing is that you really have a strong sense of family. You always have brought up family.

MN: That's my number one.

WN: Like you said, the problems with Waipahu today is that people don't have the sense of family anymore. Or you know, not just leaving for the trip for the ILWU [i.e., labor school], you wouldn't go because you had to take care of your family.

MN: The unions came in, they forget about too much, the money too much. The mind is too much on better job, equal pay and all that, but the family. . . . Anyway, life changed. Before if you have to have a good time, you had to be friendly with everybody. What you gonna do if you didn't know anybody? You can't get in the car because you didn't own one. So you had to have your fun, you have to get your fun with your neighbors. And if you want to get a big thing you didn't have to go all over to town. The company had a ballpark, we could get all the celebrations. They give it to Filipinos for so many days, they give it to the Japanese so



many days. And the Japanese had one in the camp, by themselves. And when the thing was separated like that, I start making one, O'ahu Portuguese Welfare Association. I made one. It didn't work. They [Portuguese] are the hardest people to get along. My people. We held dances in the gym. The manager came down, the assistant manager came down, they watched and danced with us. The guy from Portugal knew all about dancing. He taught that and he came to my dance twice. You got to bow old-fashioned and take your partner and bow. The real old-fashioned style. They loved that. Then the war came on, see, and ended that. But anyway, afterwards everything came on again. L'Orange told me, "Why don't you start the Portuguese. . . ." this and that.

I said, "Where are the Portuguese? They all moved all over the place." The war came on and a lot of Portuguese moved out too, you know. And I say, "Mr. L'Orange, you know my people. Very hard people to stay together."

"Oh, but you can do it."

"I have to take care my job first." I used to tell him.

I'm not a machinist anymore, I have responsibilities, my responsibilities are bigger in the mill. Only when you get your shift, you free. "Let me think about it." I never did go back. "There's no Portuguese here anyway." I told 'em. He used to love those---he used to come to couple of dances. I used to get him involved anyway. The Portuguese get any kind of trouble they come and tell me, "Eh, what's the matter with this guy Joaquin? He quit, he's going to the Mainland. How come?"

"Mr. L'Orange, I don't represent the Portuguese."

"I know, I know, you told me that story before, but I want to ask you."

(Laughter)

MN: So, that's the way it was. But family, family ties was. . . . I got it from my dad. My brothers all left home, I could never leave home. He had four sons, three went to the Mainland, my [four] sisters got married, they not home anymore. I was the guy left. He asked me to stay back, if possible. That's how I came here and get a machinist job. And then I figure, well, I may as well look for a *wahine*. And that's it. My wife [Lucy Perreira Nobriga] was only fourteen [when they met]. She was tall girl, I thought she was sixteen, seventeen. She got married when she was only sixteen and I was twenty-four. I didn't look it at that time (chuckles). And we made a good life, very good life.

WN: Well, in two weeks [April 7] you're gonna make ninety-five years old.

MN: Yeah.

WN: Yeah, so . . .

MN: Ninety-five, then I be married seventy years, if she was around. But my wife had heart trouble, blood circulation. Her leg used to come big, you know, and then go down. She had this small little pill with her. I don't know if you ever saw those.

WN: Nitroglycerin.

MN: Yeah. I used to go there get so many, so many. One day I saw Dr. Cortez. I say, "Eh Doctor, I gotta come here every week. Tell me what's wrong with my wife. I know what's wrong with her, but tell me, I want to hear from you."

"I don't know when, but she ain't got a chance. I'm not God, but when she start taking this, its best." He gave me a whole bottle of that stuff.

Every time she had pain, I said, "Take one." She couldn't stand it. She take one and the thing [pain] go away right away.

WN: Okay, well, before I turn off the tape recorder, you want to say any last things?

MN: I don't think so, except I appreciate you coming here and all that. Going through all this, mostly talk story. I had a chance to tell somebody. I never told anybody else that much. I don't believe even I telling you that much at one session. My wife knew me better than I knew her, anyway. My wife knew every move or everything you did. You won't be able to come home from work or wherever your job, "Hello." Even the voice they can pin you right off. They know you so well. She come around for a while, "Things didn't go right today."

"No, everything went good."

"No, no, no, no. Tell me, tell me. Get it out of your system."

That's it. That was my wife. The kids, too, she could tell right away. Sometimes they come home and she tell the kids, "Maybe I go let your father talk to you first. I'm not going to talk to you anymore." And that was it.

(Laughter)

WN: Okay, well thank you very much.

MN: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **AN ERA OF CHANGE**

## ***Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawai'i***

### **Volume I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**April 1994**